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WHO NEEDS AN AWARD CEREMONY? SOMEONE WILL ONLY GRAB THE MIC AND SWEAR, OR FALL OVER. NEXT YEAR, MAYBE, BUT FOR THIS – THE FIRST-EVER CLASSIC POP AWARDS – WE'VE SPENT THE LAST TWO MONTHS ON THE ROAD, HAND-DELIVERING EVERY ONE OF THESE BEAUTIFUL – AND INCREDIBLY HEAVY – BRUSHED STEEL BLOCKS. AND THERE'S A BIG UPSIDE TO 11 SEPARATE PRESENTATIONS, AND THAT'S 11 RANDOM MOMENTS THAT COULD ONLY HAPPEN IN THE WORLD OF *CLASSIC POP*...

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There was visiting Martyn Ware's studio to present Best Compilation and being treated to the first playback of a brand new Heaven 17 track. Then, a few days later, discussing Art of Noise's tortoises with Charli XCX, moments before she headed off to cause a stir on the red carpet at some other award ceremony called The Brits.

I ended up exploring the Victoria & Albert museum with Adam Ant when our plan to shoot his presentation in their marble-pillared cafe (very reminiscent of the *Prince Charming* inside gatefold) was scuppered by half term crowds. Adam suggested we go and find his actual *Prince Charming* costume, on permanent display in the museum since 2009, to shoot with that. There's no photography allowed inside the V&A, so thanks to the Theatre & Performance Room security guard for turning a blind eye...

For our session with Kevin Rowland we headed to East London's Hoxton Hotel where it just so happened that our private room was equipped with a table tennis table. And I'm pleased to report that, impeccably tailored Dexys icon he may be, Kevin was the first to take his jacket off, roll his sleeves up and thrown down the ping pong gauntlet.

Maybe next year the stars will come to us. Or maybe we'll fly further afield. We met Andy Bell at the London home he spends half his time at (the other half being in Miami), with Matt Johnson on a fleeting visit to London, and Sophie Ellis-Bextor as she headed off to the airport for Italy. We never did get to sit down with Simon Napier-Bell, who was somewhere between Thailand and LA, so we're booked to present his award the next time he touches down on UK soil.

When we met Peter Saville to present Best Designer he had some strong views to offer on the design of the award itself. And rightly so: we hope our first awards entertain as much as generate discussion and debate.

Ian Peel, Editor



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eighties electronic eclectic

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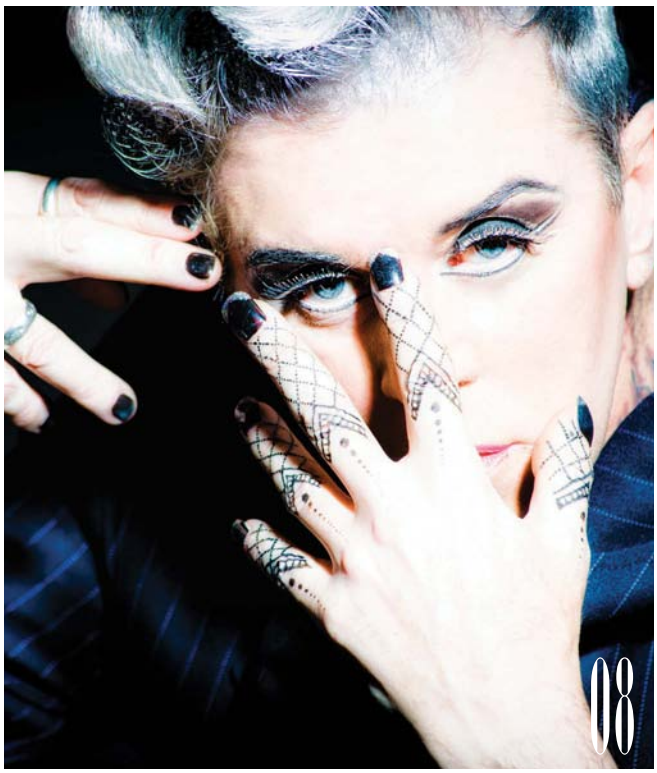
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Anthem Publishing
Suite 6, Piccadilly House,
London Road, Bath, BA1 6PL
Tel +44 (0)1225 489984
www.classicpopmag.com

THE CLASSIC POP TEAM, AND THEIR FAVOURITE AWARDS CEREMONY MOMENTS…

EDITOR
Ian Peel
ian.peel@anthem-publishing.com
The KLF at The Brits, 1992 *1

ART DIRECTOR
Jenny Cook
jenny.cook@anthem-publishing.com
Paloma Faith in her *Only Love Can Hurt Like This* performance at this year's Brits

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Rik Flynn
richard.flynn@anthem-publishing.com
Beck accepting his 1998 NME Award from a jacuzzi surrounded by his band – all wearing horse head masks

ADVERTISING MANAGER
Leah Fitz-Henry
leah.fitz-henry@anthem-publishing.com
Madge's fab performance at The Brits despite her little stumble! What a star!

DIGITAL EDITOR
Chiara Braggion
chiara.braggion@anthem-publishing.com
When Robbie Williams challenged Liam Gallagher to a fight at The Brits in 2000

CONTRIBUTORS
John Earls
Jarvis Cocker… *2
Pierre Perrone
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Wyndham Wallace
Mark Lindores
Paul Lester
Miles Picard
Dave Freak
Barney Hunter
Em Irvine
Marc Pinder

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Jon Bickley
jon.bickley@anthem-publishing.com
Kylie at the 2002 Brits

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
Paul Pettengale
paul.pettengale@anthem-publishing.com
KLF. Machine guns at The Brits. All aboard!

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Simon Lewis
simon.lewis@anthem-publishing.com

WATERCOOLER MOMENTS

*1 "…and The GRAMMYS' 1985 synthesiser showdown with Thomas Dolby, Herbie Hancock, Howard Jones and Stevie Wonder."

*2 "… pointing out to Michael Jackson how much worse *Earth Song* was than *Thriller*. This is from the days when The Brits were about the artists causing mayhem rather than being upstaged by faulty microphones or capes."

*3 "Overshadowed by a certain bucket-related incident later on, their performance was a triumphant moment."

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS



A fan of Nick Kent, Julie Burchill and Paul Morley, **Paul Lester** always wanted to be a music journalist. He became Features Editor of *Melody Maker*, and later Deputy Editor of *Uncut*. Since 2007 he has freelanced for *The Guardian*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Independent*, *MOJO*, *Classic Rock*, *Prog*… and *Classic Pop*, where this month he writes about The Blow Monkeys.



After his baptism of fire assisting jazz photographer David Redfern, **Mike Prior** shot the pop scene, literally. The cover of *Utter Madness* and the Bob Marley *Legend* centrefold are just two of his many familiar images, and over four decades he's covered everyone from Sinatra to The Sex Pistols. Last week's shoots included Jimmy Somerville, Adam Ant and Kevin Rowland.



Formerly a publicist, label representative and artist manager, **Wyndham Wallace** is a Berlin-based writer whose first book, *Lee, Myself & I* – about Lee Hazlewood, the man behind *These Boots Are Made For Walking* – is published this May. He's also subtitled German films for English audiences, written guidebooks about Norway, and sung with Morcheeba.

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES **0844 8560642** or +44 (0)1795 414877 *classicpop@servicehelpline.co.uk* PRINTING **Polestar UK Print Ltd** *Tel* +44 (0)1582 678900 DISTRIBUTION **Marketforce (UK) Ltd** The Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU *Tel* +44 (0)20 3148 3300 LICENSING ENQUIRIES **Jon Bickley** Tel +44 (0)1225 489984 *jon.bickley@anthem-publishing.com*

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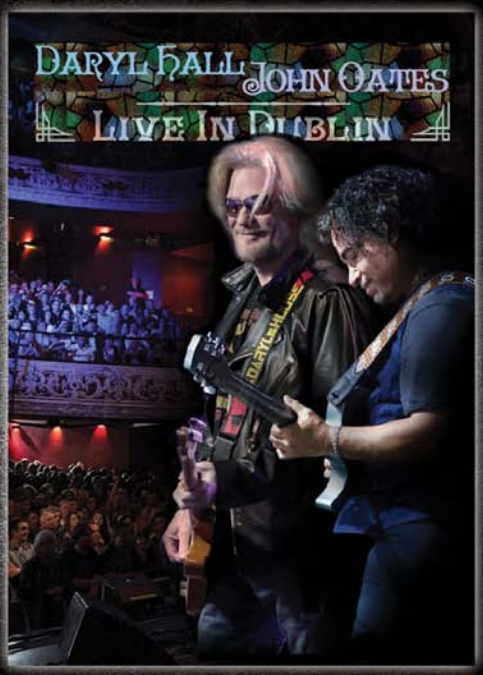
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in Dublin in July 2014.

Daryl Hall & John Oates first ever live concert performance in Dublin.

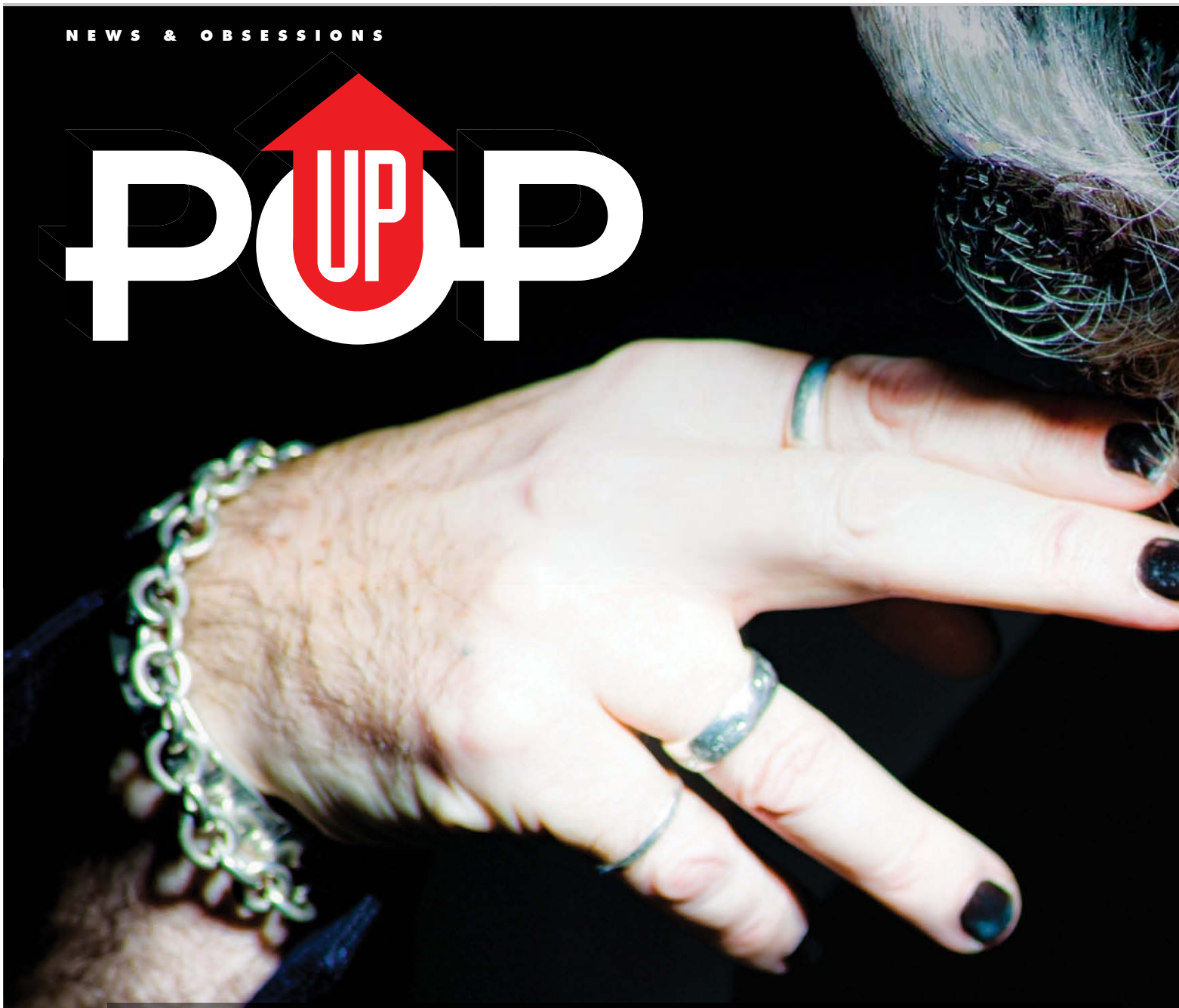
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POP UP



In honour of Steve Strange

It is with great sadness that the entire *Classic Pop* team pays tribute to Steve Strange, who passed away unexpectedly on 12th February 2015. The wonderful Welsh singer, who fronted Visage, was just 55 when he died of a heart attack at a hospital in Egypt.

Strange – real name Steve Harrington – was a leading light on London's New Romantic scene and became a figurehead for the new wave fashion and music scenes throughout the Eighties and beyond. His "heartbroken" friend Boy George led a wave of touching eulogies from the pop world. "We are devastated," read a statement by Spandau Ballet, who dedicated their performance at the Sanremo music festival to him. "Steve was a lovely warm, generous, kind-hearted man, always full of fun. He will be sadly missed." Simon Le Bon described Strange as "the leading edge of New Romantic", while Heaven 17's Martyn Ware called him "a gentle and respectful friend".

Still coming to terms with tragedy, Strange's agent Pete Bassett revealed, "Up until last year he was putting together a book of fashion styles based on the New Romantic movement, and it comes as a great shock. We understood that he had certain health problems, but nothing we knew was life-threatening."

Steve Strange was one of the most important figures to emerge from the Eighties. In 1978 he and Rusty Egan began holding David Bowie-themed nights at Billy's club in Soho beneath a brothel. A year later they moved to The Blitz in Covent Garden where they soon attracted an incredible clientele including Boy George, Marilyn, and house band Spandau Ballet, all of whom would conspire to alter the course of the era's music. "We played Bowie, Roxy [Music] and electro," said Strange. "It was where our friends could be themselves."

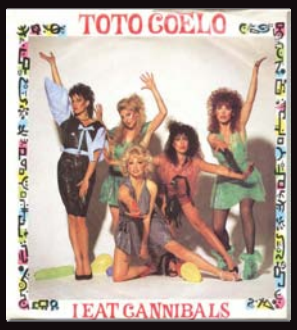
David Bowie famously hand-picked Strange to appear in his groundbreaking *Ashes To Ashes* video following a visit to the Blitz club. Mick Jagger was not so lucky; recalling the infamous incident where Jagger was denied entry, Strange wrote in his autobiography, "Mick got annoyed and said, 'Don't you know who I am?' before storming off in search of nightlife elsewhere."

Strange had already been in various bands including the Moors Murderers and the Photons before forming Visage with Egan, Midge Ure and members of Magazine. They scored a huge hit with *Fade To Grey* in 1980, and – despite struggles with addiction – Strange continued to produce music and host club nights throughout the decade. After a lengthy absence Strange returned to Visage for 2013's *Hearts And Knives*, and last year revisited the band's early work via the *Orchestral* album.



Pic: David Levine

One Hit Wonder

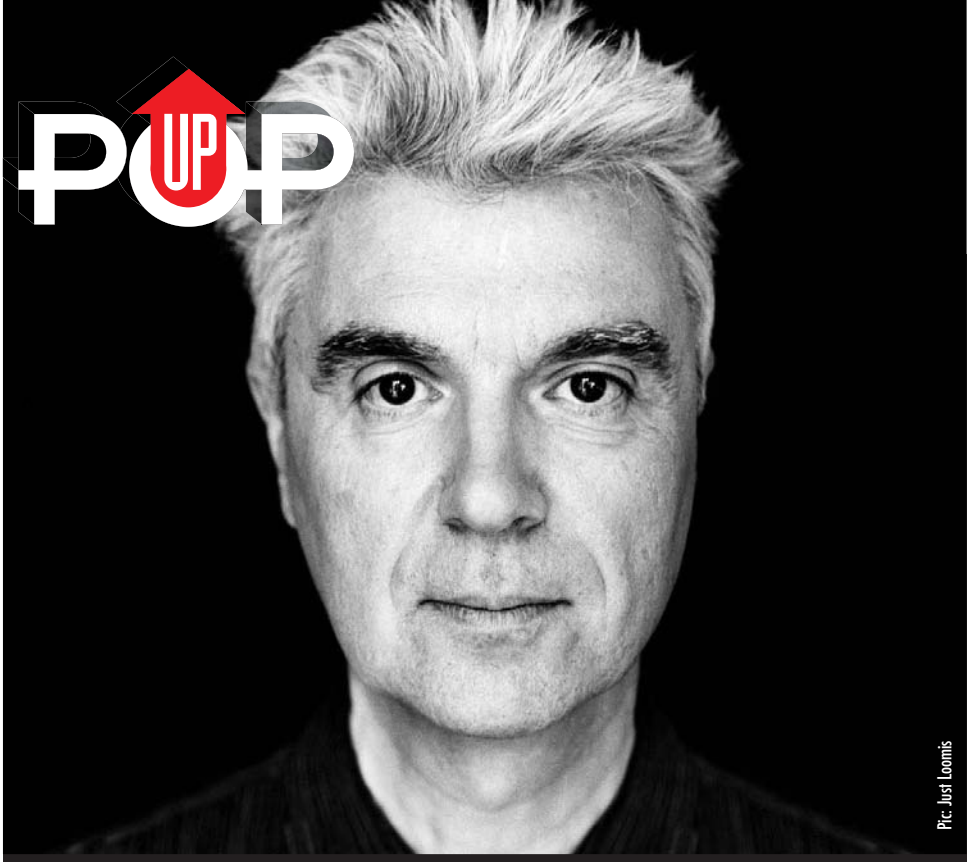


No.16
I EAT CANNIBALS
TOTO COELO

Put together by Bananarama producer Bobby Blue, Toto Coelo's line-up featured Legs & Co dancer Anita Mahadervan, ex-Abba choreographer Sheen Doran, former child actress Lindsey Danvers and drama student Lacey Bond, and Ros Holness, daughter of quiz show host Bob Holness. A riot of latex and hairspray, debut single *I Eat Cannibals* reached No. 8 in the UK with its immortal line "What can we do? You're in a stew!"

Alas, follow-up single *Dracula's Tango* stalled at No. 54, and the album *Man O'War* failed to reach the Top 100. "*Dracula's Tango* was a bad choice – we'd pre-recorded loads of TV shows with a different song, *Mucho Macho*," Bond tells *Classic Pop*. "It was a tale of bad management and a small record label failing to promote us properly." Bond went into acting, appearing in TV dramas such as *Call The Midwife* and *Holby City*, while Danvers starred in *Cats* in the West End. Doran returned to choreography, Holness runs an online fashion firm, and Mahadervan retrained as a counsellor. "We haven't been asked to reform," admits Bond, who recently released "fun, summery" solo album *Bad Boys And Botox*. "But I still see Ros, Lindsey and Anita. I'd always intended Toto Coelo to be a stepping stone into acting, but I got to go on *Top Of The Pops* twice!" John Earls

Pop Up Pop



Pic: Just Loomis

Baton is better

Former Talking Heads man David Byrne is twirling the baton for his next project in order to introduce the world of 'colour guard' – the flag and rifle-twirling marching practice showcased at military demonstrations in North America – to theatres. Byrne is orchestrating 10 colour guard teams at Toronto's Luminato Festival on 22nd & 23rd June, where they will perform routines soundtracked by live artists including St. Vincent, Dev Hynes, tUnE-yArDs, Kelis, Nelly Furtado and many more. Byrne is also following in the footsteps of David Bowie and Jarvis Cocker by curating 2015's Meltdown festival at the Southbank Centre in London between 17th-28th August. "I plan to invite performers I've seen," says Byrne, "and others I've missed… or have dreamed of seeing."



Duran hungry for a deal

Duran Duran are putting the finishing touches on a follow-up to 2010's *All You Need Is Now*. "We're not hurrying," Simon Le Bon explains. "It's being mixed, and a couple of people want to make guest appearances. And we're looking for a record deal." These days the band, who will perform live at Bestival in the summer, prefer to shop for a deal with each new project. "We've done short-term deals because we wanted freedom," Simon says. "We can't go to a record company and say, 'We're going to do an album' – you have to present music to them. I'm aware that if you're Lady Gaga then they'll give you what you want, but we're different."

MANY HAPPY RETURNS FOR ABC

ABC are taking *The Lexicon Of Love* back on the road. Following a series of acclaimed shows in recent years, Martin Fry returns to perform the band's classic debut album at five UK shows this coming November. The Southbank Sinfonia Orchestra and original orchestrator/conductor Anne Dudley will join ABC for the dates, which kick off at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on 4th November before rounding off at Birmingham Symphony Hall on the 9th November.





Reloading the past tomorrow

Reload Festival 2015 promises to bring together multiple generations of pop stars at the Norfolk Showground between Friday 11th and Sunday 13th September. Saturday and Sunday are the main musical event days, headlined by reggae kings UB40's Ali Campbell, Astro and Mickey Virtue, plus a resurgent Boomtown Rats. Along the way Billy Ocean, M People, Level 42, Marc Almond, Howard Jones, Jimmy Somerville and Rick Astley promise to unleash musical perfection over the countryside. But that's not all; London's longest-running clubnight Carwash will also be hosting the official after show party on the Saturday night, spinning retro gems for costumed dance fans from 10pm to 1am. More major acts to be announced 19th March so don't miss out, visit **www.facebook.com/ReloadFestivalUK** for all the latest news. There are a variety of ticket options at www.nationalboxoffice.co.uk (0871-224-1112) from day passes to full camping. For Glamping and Pampering options visit Yippee Yurts www.reloadfestival.co.uk/reload-glamping.

Robot no show

Kraftwerk fans were left disappointed when a former band member failed to turn up to the first-ever academic conference on the German techno pioneers. Fans and professors including Stephen Mallinder from Cabaret Voltaire read papers and discussed the Dusseldorf act's merits at the snappily titled *Industrielle Volksmusik For The Twenty-First Century: Kraftwerk And The Birth Of Electronic Music In Germany* over two days at Aston University in Birmingham. However, keynote speaker and former Kraftwerk mainstay Wolfgang Flur was a no-show. "He did not turn up," said Aston University's Uwe Schutte, who put the event together. "It's disappointing, but that's what you expect from Kraftwerk."



MCGEE TAKES IT TO THE CHAPEL

Ex-Creation boss Alan McGee is hoping to convert a 12th century Baptist chapel into a world class music venue, but he and his wife Kate Holmes, formerly of Mute act Client, are up against the local council in the Brecon Beacons National Park, who are refusing to grant planning permission for change for use. "It's just about ticking all the right boxes so we are totally legit," says Kate. The couple hope to attract bigger names to this unique venue; "We're going to get the Mary Chain, Echo and The Bunnymen, Pete Wylie and others," Kate adds. "We're going to do that every three months. We'll charge £3."



LILAC TIME AGAIN

The long-awaited return of The Lilac Time is finally upon us. *No Sad Songs* arrives 6th April and it's the first to be released under the band's original name (rather than as Stephen Duffy And The Lilac Time) since 2001's *Lilac6*. Stephen and Claire Duffy, along with multi-instrumentalist Nick Duffy, recorded the 10 songs in Cornwall including the first single *She Writes A Symphony*.



POP QUIZ

1 What was the name of Paul McCartney and Kanye West's recent first single together?

2 Which former boxer features on Madonna's new album *Rebel Heart*?

3 Muhammad Ali covered which Ben E King song as a single in 1963?

4 What was the name of King's only UK Top 10 single after *Love And Pride*?

5 Prince and Madonna's duet *Love Song* appeared on which Madonna album?

6 On August 9, 1986, where did Queen perform their final concert with Freddie Mercury?

7 Who was Duran Duran's drummer from 1989-91?

8 Which three members of UB40 have reunited to headline at Reload festival this summer?

9 Which veteran musician produced Adam Ant's 1983 hit *Puss 'N Boots*?

10 Name the 1981 UK Top 10 hit by Landscape, the band featuring Spandau Ballet/Five Star producer Richard James Burgess?

11 The KLF remixed which Pet Shop Boys single?

12 The KLF's Jimmy Cauty is married to which Eighties pop star?

13 Bill Drummond, Holly Johnson and The Lightning Seeds' Ian Broudie were all members of which Seventies Liverpool band?

14 *Thunder In The Mountains* was a 1981 UK Top Five hit for which singer?

15 What is the surname of the brothers Pat and Greg in Hue And Cry?

HOW DID YOU DO?

13-15 The Winner Takes It All
10-12 I Should Have Known Better
6-9 I Feel For You
0-5 Give It Up

ANSWERS **1** *Only One;* **2** *Mike Tyson;* **3** *Stand By Me;* **4** *Alone Without You;* **5** *Like A Prayer;* **6** *Knebworth;* **7** *Sterling Campbell;* **8** *Ali Campbell, Mickey Virtue and Astro;* **9** *Phil Collins;* **10** *Einstein A Go Go;* **11** *So Hard;* **12** *Alannah Currie of The Thompson Twins;* **13** *Big In Japan;* **14** *Toyah;* **15** *Kane*

POP UP POP

BURIED TREASURES

Rooting around those boxes of junk in your loft may turn up more than you hoped for. While many vinyl releases from the Seventies, Eighties and Nineties are worth next to nothing – nostalgic value aside, of course – some could land you a small fortune, should you choose to part with them. Here, we take four rare artefacts to the experts at 991.com and ask them for a valuation. Browse their online store at www.991.com... and get **15% off using voucher code CP150115**.

NEWS OF THE WORLD
QUEEN

Ultra-rare genuine original 1977 US Elektra Records 12" x 12" promotional-only acrylic mirror with a silver frame. Produced in very tiny numbers, this mirror has been silkscreen printed with the iconic robot image from the album sleeve. If you have one, it might fetch upwards of £250.

VALUE UP TO £250



BEDTIME STORIES
MADONNA

Mega-rare 1994 US 11-track promotional-only special limited edition DJ-only double vinyl LP pressed on bright PINK VINYL! Issued to radio and club DJs in a custom numbered stickered picture sleeve. PRO-A-7311. Mint copies of these are fetching near £200.

VALUE AROUND £200



SONGS OF FAITH AND DEVOTION
DEPECHE MODE

Official 1993 Mute UK promotional-only 6" wax candle. Measuring approximately 2" in diameter and formed in black wax, printed with the original purple logo artwork. Sealed from new and unlit candles might fetch around £60.

VALUE AROUND £60



RYKO US CD ALBUM IN ORIGINAL LONG BOXES
DAVID BOWIE

Widely used for CDs in the Eighties and early Nineties but hard to store, these longboxes began to fade from popularity and were eventually obsolete by 1993. If you find a sealed Bowie reissue, it could fetch between £50 and £75.

VALUE £50-75



EVERYTHING INCLUDING FILM

Tracey Thorn's eight-track soundtrack EP, *Songs From The Falling*, will be out on 27th April on Strange Feeling. Recorded in a north London home studio, the 17-minute collection accompanies Carol Morley's film *The Falling*, set in a girls' school in the late Sixties. "Carol sent me a box of instruments – wood-block, tambourine, triangle, recorder – and I used the scene as a springboard for my songs," says the former EBTG vocalist. "I wanted to leave in all the timing discrepancies to capture the freeform feel of an untutored school performance."





Photo: Hana Knizova

Semi-detached line-up

Blancmange's aptly-titled new album *Semi Detached* marks a brave new dawn for Neil Arthur, as the singer has been forced to work solo because of bandmate Stephen Luscombe's ongoing health issues. "I had to play the keyboards!" explains Arthur. "There was no way Stephen was going to be able to work in the studio, let alone tour. I just had to get on with it.'

Still, Luscombe may well return to the fold in the future. "Stephen and I may be able to record again, I don't know, but in the meantime Blancmange will continue onward beyond *Semi Detached*," says Arthur. "Coincidentally, I saw Stephen the other day and we did end up chatting about a book-writing venture!"

ERASURE

The Violet Flame

CLASSIC POP 2015 AWARDS BEST ALBUM

★★★★★

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POP UP



THRIFT SHOP BOYS

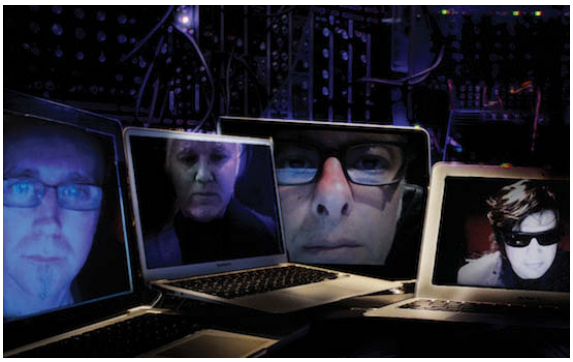
You too could achieve the Pet Shop Boys look for less than the price of a bag of chips. The synthpop duo may allude to a super-glam existence on stage, but these days their extravagant outfits are made on a surprisingly tight budget.

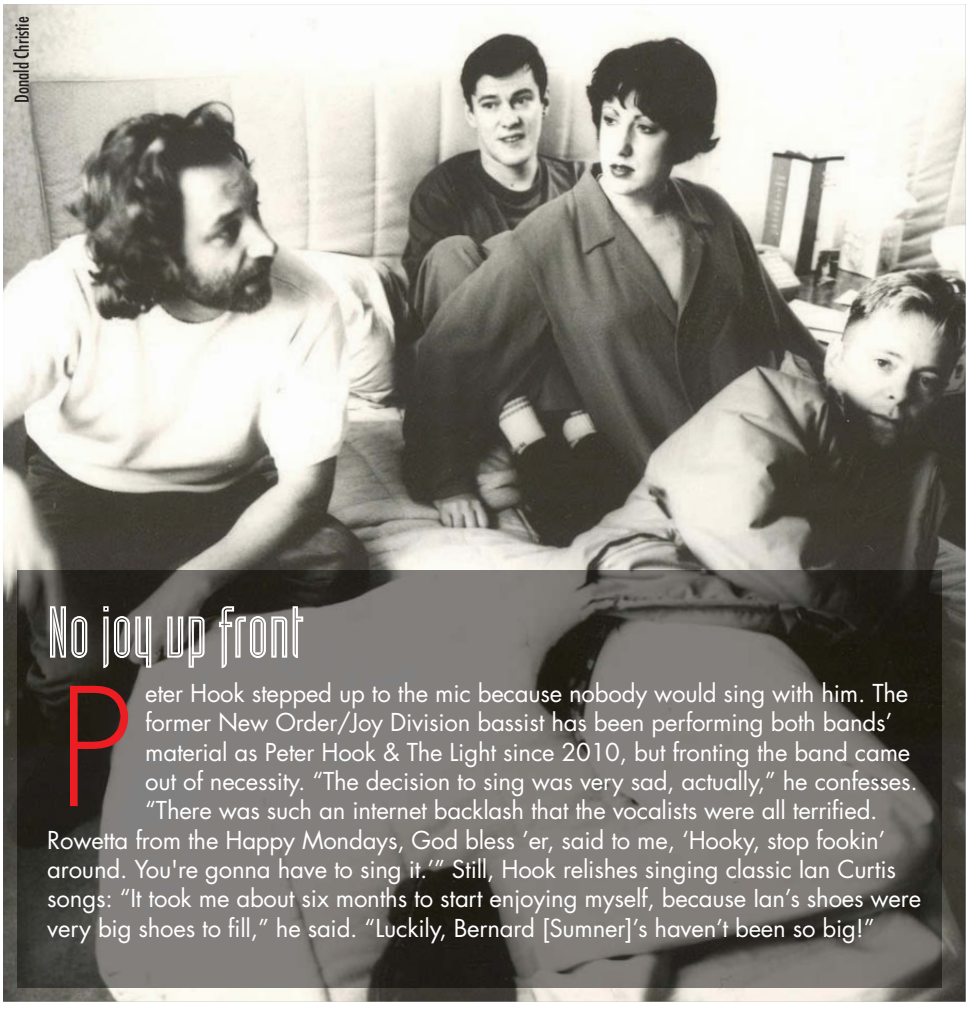
"Our costume designer, Jeffrey Bryant, is an absolute genius when it comes to designing these things," Neil Tennant reveals. "Sometimes he sits backstage putting something together.

"He likes to go to those cheap bargain shops and buy random stuff and put it together to create something absolutely unexpected. He once made four headpieces that cost less than £1. One of the outfits we wear is made up of 3000 drinking straws."

Synth party

London's Royal College Of Music was the venue for the largest-ever gathering of analogue synthesisers earlier this year. Electro quartet Node – made up of producers Flood and Ed Buller, composer Mel Wesson, and synth oracle Professor Dave Bessell – were making only their third live appearance in their 21-year history, and ended a 17-year hiatus by bringing out 10 tons of modular synths worth over half a million quid for the show on 27th February. Flood, who has also been busy on PJ Harvey's *Recording In Progress*, stated, "Node is not about analogue or digital, man or machine, but about expressing emotions by human interaction. We are not an app!" The group's second album *Node 2* is out now.





No joy up front

Peter Hook stepped up to the mic because nobody would sing with him. The former New Order/Joy Division bassist has been performing both bands' material as Peter Hook & The Light since 2010, but fronting the band came out of necessity. "The decision to sing was very sad, actually," he confesses. "There was such an internet backlash that the vocalists were all terrified. Rowetta from the Happy Mondays, God bless 'er, said to me, 'Hooky, stop fookin' around. You're gonna have to sing it.'" Still, Hook relishes singing classic Ian Curtis songs: "It took me about six months to start enjoying myself, because Ian's shoes were very big shoes to fill," he said. "Luckily, Bernard [Sumner]'s haven't been so big!"

TIFFANY LOOKS BACK

Long before Black Friday existed, Tiffany, the 15 year-old pop star behind *I Think We're Alone Now,* was causing riots on her tour of shopping malls across America in 1987. "When people were being shoved against barricades and it wasn't safe and we were being shut down, I actually started crying," she recalls. Tiffany sold five million records in 18 months, but a follow-up was not easy. "For the next album, you're rushed into the studio. It kind of lost some of its charm." Legend would have it that Tiffany hated her Eighties rival Debbie Gibson, but that was never the case: "Debbie and I have really never been friends – up until now, which is funny," she says. "That's not because we didn't want to get to know each other. It's just, we were busy."



Euro be so lucky

Kylie fans are keen to get the pop princess to represent Australia at this year's Eurovision Song Contest. The endearingly dodgy music contest has allowed the Aussies to enter a singer at the 2015 event, held in Vienna in May, as a one-off, and now a petition is urging Kylie to get involved. "Kylie already has a foot in Europe's door," diehard fan Andrew Parr declares. "We just need a good song, and Eurovision 2015 is ours!" Unfortunately, a friend of Kylie's responded that "she'd be washing her hair".

2015 promises to be another bumper year for the pop pixie, who bagged the Australian Of The Year prize for displaying "archetypal Aussie characteristics in abundance". She also headlines British Summer Time festival in London's Hyde Park on 21st June.



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LOST & FOUND



No.16
CRAZY PEOPLES RIGHT TO SPEAK
KAJA

It's baffling to think how quickly Kajagoogoo were allowed to fall apart. Within two years of worldwide hit *Too Shy* they'd sacked singer Limahl, released an album without him, lost drummer Jez Strode, and set out to pursue their pre-fame love of synth-prog. From its pompous title onwards, *Crazy Peoples Right To Speak* is exactly the sort of rudderless mess that can result from too much 'artistic freedom'.

By 1985, Nick Beggs was in sole control of the lyrics. He, guitarist Steve Askew and keyboardist Stuart Kneale sought credibility with the shortened 'Kaja' name, but even hotshot Elton John/Duran producer Ken Scott couldn't inject energy into songs as lifeless as *You Really Take My Breath Away*, which merely features a metronome in place of Strode's drums. First single *Shouldn't Do That* had some of the old tight funk energy, but it seemed Kaja were mired in deep googoo.

Wisely splitting soon after, the full original five-piece line-up reformed for a car-crash comeback in 2004 on VH1's *Bands Reunited*. All three albums were reissue, with their farewell adding two B-sides and the not-bad-actually 12" remixes of *Shouldn't Do That*. If only they'd heeded that song's advice.
John Earls

POP UP



The Miracle Of Dave

Dave Stewart took home the Outstanding Contribution To UK Music prize at the Music Producers Guild awards in February. "When Annie and I decided to be a duo, Eurythmics, there was nobody else," he said. "I had to learn everything – how to record and manage yourself, how to get a bank to give you money to buy equipment to make a record. Everything that an entrepreneur has to do for a start-up business I had to do for Eurythmics." Paul Epworth nabbed his third Producer of the Year Award; Giorgio Moroder took home the Innovation prize, while Mandy Parnell collected the Mastering Engineer award from her friend Boy George.

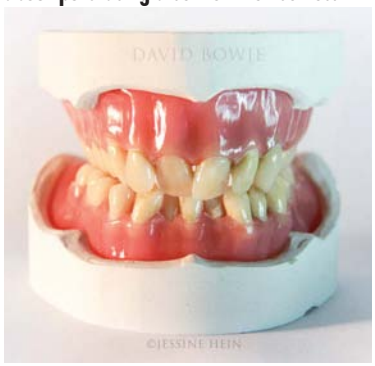


Rewinding Manoeuvres

Cerebral synthpoppers OMD headline Rewind Scotland, Rewind North and Rewind South this summer alongside Bananarama, Belinda Carlisle and Kim Wilde. Rewind Scotland at Perth Scone Palace between 24-26 July will also enjoy sets by Tom Bailey and Jimmy Somerville; those heading to Rewind North on 7-9 August at Cheshire Capesthorne Hall can look forward to The Human League and ABC, and the British Electric Foundation, Midge Ure and T'Pau are among the added highlights at Rewind South at Henley On Thames between 21-23 August. Tickets: www.rewindfestival.com.

GOLDEN DENTAL YEARS

Pop history has it that David Bowie's mystique was tarnished by *Labyrinth*, or perhaps Tin Machine, but for many fans the Grand Dame's magnificent pop reign came to a shuddering halt when he decided to get his teeth fixed in the Eighties. Now Bowiephiles can relive those Golden Dental Years thanks to artist Jessine Hein, who has created an exact replica of the Thin White Duke's wonky gnashers. So far only a single cast has been made from acrylics, plaster and paint, but fans have already inquired about purchasing a set for themselves.



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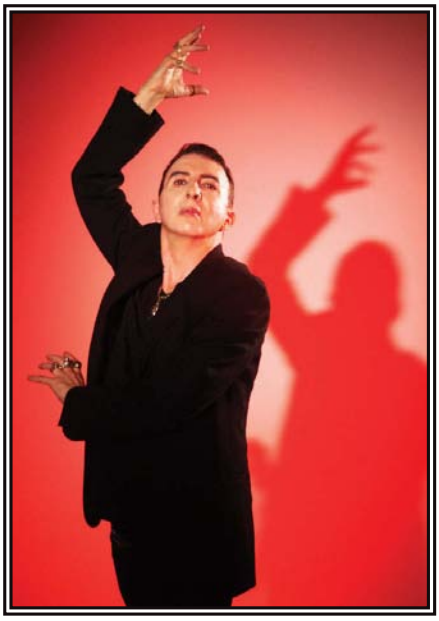
MARC ALMOND

In 2010, Marc Almond announced that *Varieté* was likely to be his final pop album. Five years later, he's thankfully changed his mind with the "polished posh pop" of *The Velvet Trail*. Made with Rihanna/Lana Del Rey producer Chris Braide, it's vintage Almond – but what persuaded the ex-Soft Cell man to break out the "satin, velvet and eyeliner" again?

What made you decide to come back to making pop music?
After *Varieté*, my inspiration dissipated. I put a lot of myself into it and felt I'd said all I needed to say. I thought "How many more albums do I need to make?" It felt like the right time to get out. But I also felt I was moving away from the heart of what I like to do. Pop music is what I love most and, however classical or avant-garde a project is, I try to put rock and pop at the heart of it. I did an EP, *The Dancing Marquis*, with Tony Visconti last year, but I couldn't afford to do a full album with him! So I was thinking "What next?" when this great gift arrived in the shape of these songs from Chris Braide.

Why did he send you the songs?
He's a lifelong fan. Unbeknownst to me, Chris had been writing songs he thought I should sing, a mixture of elements from throughout my career. But, when my manager received the songs, he was told "Chris would love Marc to put lyrics to these songs for someone else to sing". I was so upset. I thought "I love these songs, why can't I sing them myself?" My attempts to write songs for other people have always been disastrous, anyway. I can only really write for my own world. Thankfully, Chris sent another email, saying that I should sing them if I want.

Was this the first time you'd swapped song ideas via email?
It was. At first, I thought "Does this even count as making a record?" I'd write



lyrics and record guide vocals, then two days later a recording would arrive that sounded as if it was from a million-dollar album. I could tell Chris knew my music. Songs like *Winter Sun* and *Minotaur* have an Eighties element that are very Soft Cell. Until now, I'd have bolted at that idea. Whenever anyone has tried to write songs like that for me, they always get it wrong and I think "You're trying too hard to please me". But these were executed so well, they were too good to ignore. So I thought I'd embrace that side of me, rather than trying to push it away.

How hard is it to embrace your past without becoming a parody of your Eighties self?
It depends how you execute it. It's easy for older artists to find comfort in the persona of when you were most successful. There's nothing wrong with that. It's like being an actor – you're an entertainer playing the part that makes people happy. When I do nostalgic festivals like Rewind, I have to embrace that. I can't go on stage thinking "I'm going to do one of my prog songs from *The Tyburn Tree*" and look dour in jeans. I have to celebrate my past, but that doesn't mean I have to become a cliché of my Eighties image, wearing bangles and chicken bones round my neck! Part of me is an artist, part of me is an entertainer. I know when to bring those together and when to separate them.

Does it feel the right time to make this album for what the public want from you too?
I've given up wondering what the public want! It's a very strange musical world now, where parents and kids listen to each other's music. That shockability has gone – parents grew up buying Madonna albums, so they've seen it all before. I'm so lucky to have had success in the Eighties, when record companies were more maverick. If you had two flop albums, they'd go "Oh, we'll do it on the next one". You were allowed to grow and explore, which is why a lot of artists from that period have lasted until now.

Lyrically, *The Velvet Trail* is a very romantic album...
I have an almost childlike naivety towards romance. I try to retain that, to crush the cynic and nurture the romantic. Aside from the title track, which looks back at growing up in Southport, I wanted it to reflect how I feel about life now. Today's culture can be very mean. I feel the world is losing romance, so I try to work against that and look at where it can still be discovered. When I wrote for Soft Cell, that was a more cynical side of me. Maybe that was from working with Dave Ball, I don't know. But a cynic is a disillusioned romantic.

Did writing songs as sexually charged as *Pleasure's Wherever You Are* and *Demon Lover* solidify your views on romance?
Not really, it was more "This is how



I am". I had various people from my past in mind when I wrote *Pleasure's Wherever You Are* and it's such a "me" song – exploring mystical worlds and the twilight life. Chris and I wanted this album to be very velvet and satin, which is how a lot of people see me. He said "I can just see you in the *Pleasure*… video wearing loads of smoky eyeliner". I found I was putting a lot of mythology in the songs. There's a strong pagan feeling in there, because I'm basically a hippy at heart. At 13, I had long hair, burnt joss sticks and wore loon pants. I got into glam rock and punk, but I've rediscovered that hippy side now. I love nature and the pagan side of life.

The most glam-rock song on the album, *When The Comet Comes*, is a duet with Beth Ditto...

Chris Braide was producing Beth at the same time and he played some of the songs to her. I'd met Beth, thought she was fantastic, but never in a million years would have it occurred to me to duet with her. Besides, when a duet is planned, invariably it's a pain in the neck. I set out not to have any duets on this album, because other singers come in with their own agendas and commitments. But I love it when they're not contrived and they just happen, like this one.

How did you and Chris get on?

Well, we decided early on that we weren't going to actually speak, not even on the phone, until the album was finished. We didn't want to ruin the magic! So we were exchanging six emails a day, discovering a shared love of artists like T-Rex. Once the album was finished, Chris was due to be in London, so we arranged to meet for tea at The Delauny restaurant. He walked through the door, and I said "Hang on, I know you!" Chris hadn't told me, but he was one of the backing singers on [Soft Cell's 2002 reunion album] *Cruelty Without Beauty*! We'd often passed in the studio corridor, and Dave Ball was one of the people who taught Chris how to use a programmer. I knew Chris' name from somewhere, but I hadn't made the connection because, even though I knew he's really from Cheshire, I couldn't stop thinking of him as this hotshot young LA producer type. We still email all the time and meet up when he's in London.

So, is *The Velvet Trail* your final pop album?

I don't plan anymore. I can't say "I'll make a pop album next year", because offers come along to push me in another direction. I'm getting enquiries now that might see me in the theatre. My long-term plan is that, because I turn 60 in 2017, I want to make that a celebration. I've provisionally booked to play the Royal Albert Hall on my birthday. I'd love to do an anthology of my favourite songs, because so much of my stuff has been overlooked. A singles compilation would be great. I'm fighting to get the rights back to some of those, and it's slowly going my way. And I'd love to do a Soft Cell box-set. I've got loads of unheard concerts from our early days, even if some of it's on not-great-quality cassettes.

John Earls

Video Tech

IT'S ELECTION YEAR. WILL TODAY'S POP VIDEOS MIX MUSIC AND POLITICS WITH SUCH DIGNITY?



HAPPY HOUR

THE HOUSEMARTINS

In the guise of gormless, chinless, braying yuppies and their Plasticine doppelgangers, Paul Heaton and his troupe of dancing bandmates invade a local pub and skewer the Thatcherite 'win' culture. **www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_TMUJIWwyI**



WALLS COME TUMBLING DOWN

THE STYLE COUNCIL

The Council rock a workingmen's club, and Weller's loose-limbed frugging has aged better than most of the heavy symbolism. "Public enemy n-n-number 10!" **www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5HfOipwvts**



SEXUALITY

BILLY BRAGG

Try not to blub at the great Kirsty MacColl looking so carefree as she sings along in a rave-themed video of Bragg's paean to breaking down sexual boundaries. **www youtube.com/watch?v=liNnCKPeEv0**

POP UP

Belle UK pop

British pop music still rules, according to Belle And Sebastian. The band's album *Girls In Peacetime Want To Dance* is a throwback to classic melancholic pop of the Eighties, and Stuart Murdoch believes it is music that could only have come from the UK. "Britain was brilliant for pop because the country could get polarised by certain songs very easily," he enthuses. "It could be terrific – The Smiths and The Jam, for instance – but at the same time we'd have these weird one-hit wonders." Belle And Sebastian tour the UK in May before moving onto North America in June.





ESPECIALLY FOR PETE

Pete Waterman's career will be celebrated with a special show at London's Royal Festival Hall on 29th July. The PWL mastermind will take centre stage at a Life In Song Series concert featuring guest artists interpreting his music.

Veteran TV boss Michael Grade will interview Pete live on stage to discuss his 100 plus Top 40 UK Hits and impact on pop culture. Pete said, "Little did I think when I visited London as a child from Coventry that one day I would appear at the Festival Hall – not bad for a boy who left school unable to read or write!"

Crazy for youth

She's been feasting on the blood of pop's youth for decades but even Madonna is beginning to feel her age. The 56-year-old teamed up with fresh-faced DJs Avicii and Diplo on new album *Rebel Heart*, and found herself being the responsible adult. "DJs can't sit still for five minutes," she joked. "I was like the school teacher walking around going, 'Guys, guys, we have to finish this song. Can you get off your phone? Can you stop tweeting? We have to finish this song!'" Typically, the album's euphoric first single *Living For Love* is about "taking a bad situation and turning it into something good… having your heart broken and learning about it and rising above. I hope it inspires people. We've all had our hearts broken, but I'm not bitter. I'm a hopeless romantic and that's really what the song's about."



Mert Alas & Marcus Piggott

GODFATHERS of POP

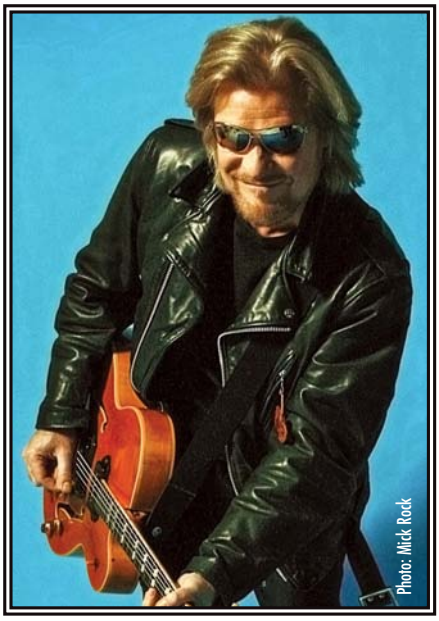
DARYL HALL

Last year's tour by Daryl Hall And John Oates – captured by the cameras at the Olympia Theatre in July, a performance just released on a new DVD, *Live In Dublin* – was as rapturously received as any in their career. But has it inspired the pair to consider making a new album together? Daryl tells *Classic Pop* of their plans and of his newfound career as a television presenter…

Why do you think Daryl Hall And John Oates are back in fashion?
The people we're influenced by make timeless music, and our music is timeless too. It's not really locked to a certain period. Maybe that's because I was writing about things that were personal but also universal, so they transcend the period they were written in.

Any chance of a new album together? It's 12 years since your last album, *Do It For Love*...
We're really proud of the work we did for so many years and we tour behind that all the time, but we work very separately now. John makes records, and I'm trying to find time to do a solo album too, in between my TV shows and running my club, Daryl's House, in New York. We're both so busy that we have no plans on making new music together. Maybe one day. Never say never.

How has your friendship with John changed over the years?
I don't think it ever has. We've been friends since we were teenagers, and it's the fact that we were friends before we became musical and business partners that has sustained us over the years. Outside of touring, we don't see each other that often as we live very separate lives, but we do see the world in the same way and that's seriously important. We talk with each other a lot on planes


Photo: Mick Rock

and tourbuses, bonding over books and seeing the world through the same eyes. But we've always regarded ourselves as very different individuals – in fact we called our production company Two Headed Monster because that's the last thing we are.

Kanye West and many others have sampled you, The Killers and Arcade Fire are fans of your music... would you be interested in working with new artists?
I'm not really much for writing for other people. If I write a good song, I'd rather sing it myself, thanks! The same goes for producing; I never really produced for other artists. One of the best decisions John and I made was to start producing our own albums in 1980, as it meant we didn't have to answer to anyone, except on the business side. But I don't think anyone should have to think about how a song is produced when they hear it. My productions are eclectic and use a lot of techniques, but a production should seem as though it's effortless.

How is your new album sounding so far?
It's very optimistic as far as the sound goes, but lyrically there are a lot of different moods as I've been going through my archives to revisit kernels of ideas from different periods. The overall feel is organic, very band-oriented soul and R&B songs.

Do you ever surprise yourself about how your frame of mind must have been when you revisit old ideas?
I really do. Occasionally I'll hear one of our old songs and think "What was I thinking?!" Some of my old lyrics seem very prescient, especially from the start of my career when I was in my early twenties. It surprises me, because I seem to have a knowledge of both my own future and the future in general that I couldn't have known.

You've got your own music TV show, *Live From Daryl's House* on HBO, and *Daryl's Restoration Over-Hall* on The DIY Network, about restoring houses. How are you enjoying TV presenting?
I've learned to ignore it, which is the best way to deal with it. I treat the camera as a person I'm having a conversation with, which is a technique most people do if they're successful at it.

Does the menu at the Daryl's House club have any dishes named after your hits? Private Pies, You Make My Breams, Your Fish Is On My List...?
No! There are some family recipes on there, but that's as close at it gets. The Goo Goo Dolls and Joe Walsh have dishes on it too. It's a chance to see bands from my TV show, watch them with me and we can all hang out. I'd love to open one in London.
John Earls

TRANSMISSION

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"SYNTHPOP WAS THE ENEMY…"

I just wanted to say I'm loving your magazine, and also that it's not just for nostalgic Eighties children. I wasn't old enough to appreciate the music you cover when it came out. In fact, in the Nineties, synthpop was 'the enemy'. Now, thanks to your mag, I'm able to catch up on all the great music I missed!

A couple of things I'd like to see: with Edgar Froese's death, an article on Tangerine Dream and Eighties synthpop soundtracks. IIRC, you correctly voted Vangelis' *Blade Runner* score the best of the Eighties, so you could cover his work too. Also, some more coverage of Australian acts (other than Kylie) from the borders of new wave, like Icehouse and INXS. Finally, I'd appreciate a Lowdown on Hall & Oates. They were supposedly the most successful pop duo ever, and I know next to nothing about them!

CONOR BENDLE, CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

"…IN MY LOCAL M&S"

Thanks Ian for the recent feature on one of my favourite bands, China Crisis. I don't think any other music magazine would have published such an article. It was great reading about some of the creative work which has gone into the producing of their albums and a respectful look back at the life of Kevin Wilkinson. I bumped into Gary Daly in my local M&S the other month (bit surreal!) and then again after their great Xmas gig at The Cavern in Liverpool. Really nice guy who had time to stop and chat. I'm looking forward to hearing their new album.

GRAEME SOMERVILLE, MANCHESTER

"FANTASTIC BASS PLAYING"

Great magazine. I completely agree with *Pelican West* as Issue 15's Classic Album choice and also agree with one of your letter writers who suggested *Rattlesnakes*. It's great to see a magazine that includes a lot of bands that up to now have been deemed too uncool for interviews and retrospectives, when a lot of us secretly – or openly! – loved them in the first place. I'm writing in to suggest Linx's first album *Intuition* should be covered as a Classic Album. It was a brilliant album with fantastic songs and bass playing (Sketch – whatever happened to him?). Shame the second album was a let-down!

JACK WHITE, HADDENHAM

"BEAT AND SYNTH STABS"

I always find it interesting how people describe Stock, Aitken and Waterman's music as 'classic pop'. To me, my interest in the Top 40 pretty much ended in 1988 when their serious invasion of the charts began. The appropriately named Hit Factory churning out records like a Henry Ford car plant – everything exactly the same. The same repetitive beat and synth stabs on every record. Any one of their stable could sing any of the songs and you wouldn't notice any difference.

So Phil Oakey might consider playing with Ian and Martyn Ware again (CP15)? Martin Ware has said elsewhere that he'd like to tour the *Travelogue* album. Sadly Phillip's deserved loyalty towards the girls could prevent this. If Ian Marsh could be dragged out of retirement, perhaps a compromise could be reached? Human 17, anyone? Phil, Ian and Martyn could belt out the likes of *The Black Hit Of Space* with Adrian Wright on projector and then finish with *I Don't Depend On You* with the girls backing them, and Phil and Glenn could then swap places leaving the girls to join in on *Temptation*. That way, nobody should feel left out.

GARY CHURCHWARD, EXETER

"…A BIT OF A JOLLY UP"

Having taken my latest edition of *Classic Pop* on my holidays to Egypt, I was amazed that when in Sharm-el-sheikh I arrived just as Tony Hadley and Bonnie Tyler were about to do a gig in the square to turn on the Xmas lights. I got to the venue and was surprised at the quality of these two performers. I knew they were both great artists but I think one could be forgiven that they could see such a trip as a bit of a 'jolly up'. Nothing was further from the truth; Bonnie Tyler did a great hour-long set with some Jim Steinman specials in there, and still looks like the rock chick I wanted to take out… loads of energy, backed by a great band. As for Tony Hadley, I have seen him with Spandau and on his solo tour. This guy still has a brilliant voice, moved around like a 20-year old, and sung his pants off in 80+ degree heat. Fair play to him, he is ultra-professional and, having had a quick chat with him, a bloody decent bloke. As they say, there is no substitute for class

ROY ASHMAN

"MONTHLY OR BULKIER!"

Just wanted to say how much I love the magazine, but a couple of requests. Please move to monthly issues; waiting two months between issues is just too long. The Kate Bush live review – the opening segment was six songs, not seven, and *The Ninth Wave* began after *King Of The Mountain*, not *Running Up That Hill*. Also, no point in creating the Top 25 Spandau tracks and then not ordering them (apart from *True* at No. 1), they were just chronological by album. Small quibbles but it's all in the detail, and please – monthly or bulkier issues!

JAY, SURREY

"HOWDY DISCO CITIZENS!"

Thank you very much for your lovely email newsletters. I never thought I would write for such a silly reason, since I think so highly of the mag which is a real dream come true for my musical tastes, but such is the enjoyment and fun I have in reading you and having you so 'interactive' with us that I really see you as fellow fans/friends. Also, I do not use any of the current 'social networks'. Therefore allow me to be superfluously pedantic and highlight to you that in A to Z, on the B-side of ABC's *Vanity Kills*, David Yarritu actually says (and I'm going by heart) "Howdy disco citizens, I'm David Yarritu. I may be tiny-tiny-tiny but I'm STRONG!!!" It was actually Martin Fry, one of my all-time heroes, who said: "My name is Martin Fry. F – R – Y. Who needs the moon, when we got the stars…" Pure class.

CRISTIANO STEFFE, TRIESTE

TWEET IT!

@JemMaidment
Just got my 12th @ClassicPopMag – the only mag I know that gets better and better (apart from the @ArsenalMagazine of course) Buy it.

@marksplaceuk
From @ClassicPopMag "George Ezra, Tom Odell, Ed Sheeran – like choosing between Miliband, Cameron & Clegg"

@20thCenturyDan
It's an Alison Moyet kind of morning... remixes! @ClassicPopMag @AlisonMoyet

@becknroll
Finally got @classicpopmag back on the shelves in Tesco. It's been too long!

@viewfromthemarc
Great feature/interview with @ChinaCrisisUK in @ClassicPopMag – looking forward to the new album #class

@LeeWill61367365
Excellent article on @numanofficial in new @ClassicPopMag Inspired choice + analysis of his best 20 tracks

@robmesure
It's a *Pelican West* kind of morning... Thanks @ClassicPopMag

@zoehowe
Thanks @ClassicPopMag for the review of Stevie Nicks' *Visions, Dreams & Rumours* – 'a very enjoyable tome'.

@LeeCPFC
Just bought @ClassicPopMag and see that *A Prayer For The Unborn* (Andy Gray Remix) is 1/20 of the Top 20 Gary Numan tracks, great choice!!

@freakartists
"Perhaps their most subversive album to date" @ClassicPopMag review @ThePopGroup #CitizenZombie

@1976_85
Haircut 100's *Pelican West* gets Classic Album treatment in @ClassicPopMag Feb/Mar edition! Thnx @NickHeyward

@jonmhowells
Also in @ClassicPopMag, Paul Heaton cites The Bumpkin Billionaires as a *Beano* strip: it was *Whoopee!* (then *Whizzer & Chips*). *pedant face*

@TomAngel1
"You took a match to my dry August days....." @PrefabSproutNew @ClassicPopMag

FACE TO FACEBOOK

/CLASSICPOPMAG

I have to say thumbs up to Mr Ian Peel for his review of *Nothing Has Changed* by David Bowie and for mentioning two of my three fave Bowie songs as his zenith: *Loving The Alien* and *This Is Not America*, my third being *The Buddha Of Suburbia*.
ADAM STILES

Whilst reading the Dec/Jan feature on The Human League I am left with a sense of what SHOULD have been... The Human League composing the soundtrack for the film version of Orwell's *1984*. Not taking anything away from the Eurythmics, but the austere arrangements of pre-and post-Human League schism would have complemented the film wonderfully, even orchestrated!
JOHN O'SULLIVAN

Re: Feb/March issue's The Specials review. You are correct that Neville quit, but you don't mention the Skabilly rebel Roddy Byers. It was Rod that Steve Craddock replaced.
IAN ROSEWELL

I co-own and co-run the Gary Numan website Nureference. I'm working on the magazine section and am close to having 300+ magazines Gary has appeared in since 1979. Feel free to look at www.nureference.co.uk.
LEWIS LLEWELLYN

Woohoo, wifey surprised me with a pressie: the latest copy of *Classic Pop*. It's great, eight pages of Mr Numan goodness. Must order the back issues.
SKELECTRO SKELLY

Soooo excited – The Human League issue has hit Stateside! Worth its weight in gold to see The League getting their props, thank you! Love the magazine, now if we can get Susan, Phil and Joanne to tour America?
LOVISA CHRISTEL

A découvrir... NRJ Belgique's Talent 2015, Shinny: youtu.be/54qabjThmrs
PASCAL DECHANY

I am already living in February 2015, thanks to *Classic Pop*: the latest issue hit North America and I got me the calendar. Nice that Feb 25th is marked as the day when *Into The Gap* reached No. 1 in the UK. Always a good omen when you open up the first page and there's a Twins mention right there.
BLAKE BELL

INSTAGRAM

#CLASSICPOPMAG



thereseeikum
When at the hairdresser... #hairdresser #ClassicPopMag #frisør



andrewjohnt
Great morning off. Frozen but entertained. #coffee #ClassicPopMag #classicpop #dayoff



the_ryan_show
Magazine Day! #ClassicPopMag #relax #read #newmagazineday #80s #80sSynth



failedmuso
Tonight's reading matter sorted



rosiepsbkyliefan
There's a review for *III* by Take That in the section for the album reviews for this new issue of *Classic Pop*, I'm glad they seemed to enjoy it!



michielkrohne
Sorry guys, we've had a lot of fun together, but it's time for you to go.



katelyn_baer
My dad built me a record shelf and I'm so in love. Much better than keeping them on the floor. Thank you daddy. #records #8tracks

LETS ROCK

THE ULTIMATE 80s FESTIVALS

16 May 2015
Cookham
Marsh Meadow

5-7 June 2015
Bristol
Ashton Court Estate

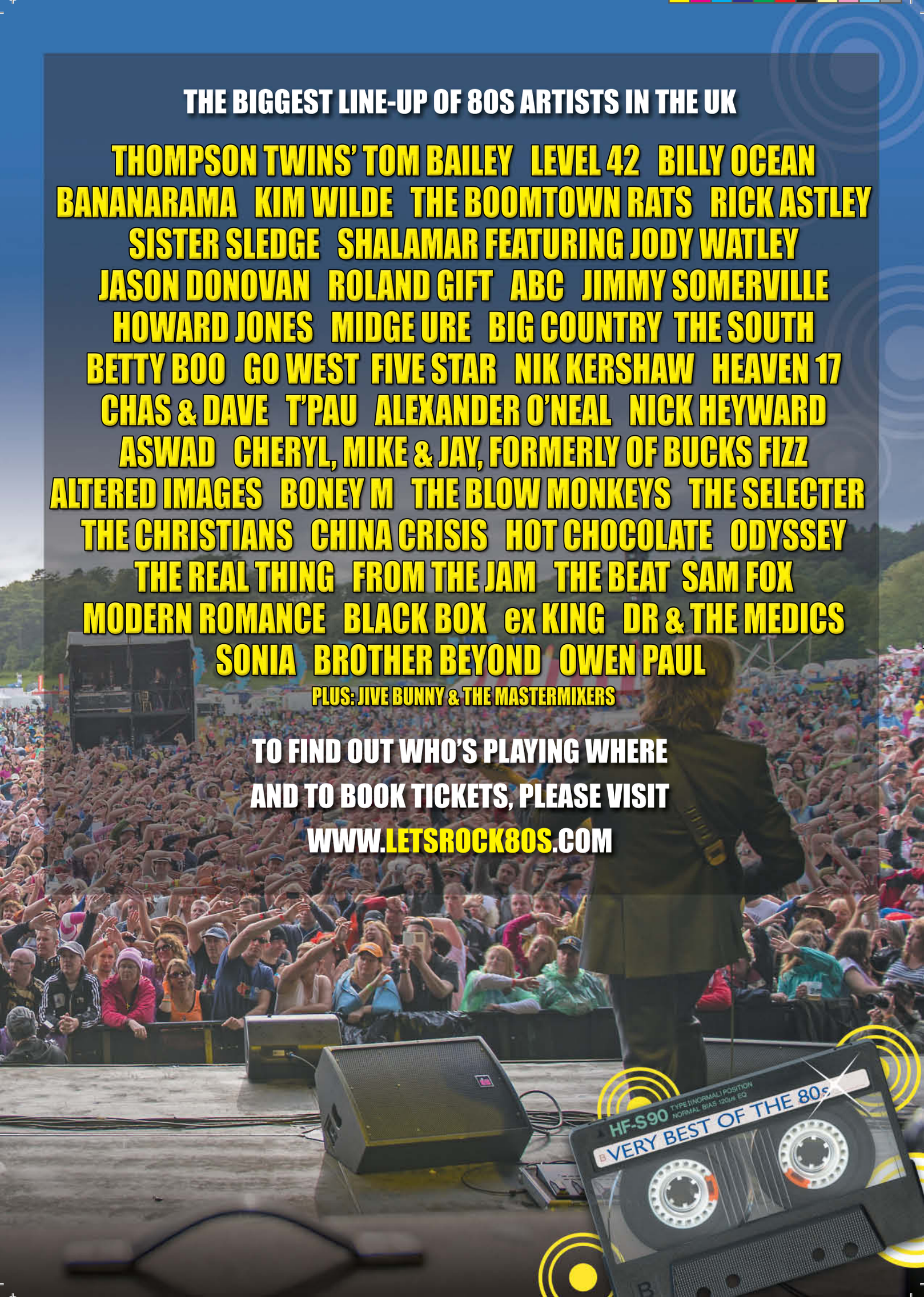
20 June 2015
Leeds
Temple Newsam

27 June 2015
London
Queen Elizabeth
Olympic Park

4 July 2015
Exeter
Powderham Castle

11 July 2015
Southampton
Southampton Common




THE BIGGEST LINE-UP OF 80S ARTISTS IN THE UK
THOMPSON TWINS' TOM BAILEY LEVEL 42 BILLY OCEAN
BANANARAMA KIM WILDE THE BOOMTOWN RATS RICK ASTLEY
SISTER SLEDGE SHALAMAR FEATURING JODY WATLEY
JASON DONOVAN ROLAND GIFT ABC JIMMY SOMERVILLE
HOWARD JONES MIDGE URE BIG COUNTRY THE SOUTH
BETTY BOO GO WEST FIVE STAR NIK KERSHAW HEAVEN 17
CHAS & DAVE T'PAU ALEXANDER O'NEAL NICK HEYWARD
ASWAD CHERYL, MIKE & JAY, FORMERLY OF BUCKS FIZZ
ALTERED IMAGES BONEY M THE BLOW MONKEYS THE SELECTER
THE CHRISTIANS CHINA CRISIS HOT CHOCOLATE ODYSSEY
THE REAL THING FROM THE JAM THE BEAT SAM FOX
MODERN ROMANCE BLACK BOX ex KING DR & THE MEDICS
SONIA BROTHER BEYOND OWEN PAUL
PLUS: JIVE BUNNY & THE MASTERMIXERS
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VERY BEST OF THE 80s



WORDS - Ian Peel
PICS - Mike Prior

THE BEST CLASSIC POP OF 2015 AWARDS SPECIAL

HELLO, GOOD EVENING AND WELCOME TO THE INAUGURAL CLASSIC POP AWARDS. OVER 22 PAGES WE'LL BE HANDING OUT PRIZES FOR 2014'S FIERCELY FOUGHT-FOR BEST ALBUM, SINGLE, BREAKTHROUGH ARTIST, COVER, FILM, COMPILATION, REISSUE, PRODUCER AND DESIGNER CATEGORIES – PLUS OUR MAVERICK SPIRIT AND LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS…

Since we revealed plans for the Classic Pop Awards last issue we've had a crazy two months listening to the nominations, thrashing out the winners and tracking everyone down around the world to hand-deliver these beautiful brushed steel obelisks which – if nothing else – every artist agreed is by far the physically heaviest award they've ever been given.

Yet these awards are weighty, too, in what we're saying and who we're acclaiming. A case in point: our first category, Best Album. There are collections of songs – plain old LPs – and there are albums, which make a bigger emotional punch than the sum of their parts. And as pop music is leading the singles market, next up is Best Single. There's been tracks, there's been hits, but then there are singles that mark a turning point – musically and stylistically – in an artist's career.

Any and all artists were eligible for every award, no matter when they first started recording, or how long they've been performing. All except for one category, Best Breakthrough. In order to choose our winner, we surveyed the current music scene, looking at where everyone had come from, where they were going, and exactly how much disruption and chaos – prerequisites for pop greatness – they were causing in the process.

Jazz is based on it, classical is too… so why does pop have this slight chip on its shoulder about cover versions? It's time to get over this baggage once and for all, especially when in the last year or so we've heard Grace Jones take on Gary Numan's *Me! I Disconnect From You*, Claudia Brücken put a rocket up David Bowie's *Everyone Says "Hi"*, and Tears For Fears refresh Arcade Fire's *Ready To Start*. So our Best Cover Version award is here, and here to stay. This year's choice could prove quite contentious, though…

We have an instant classic taking the Best Film gong, a movie that sets the bar very high, one by which all others will be measured in future years. And you might think that Best Reissue and Best Compilation are obvious, easy categories, but history is only half the story, for the winners of these categories are the reissues and compilations that make us equally excited for the future.

The Classic Pop Awards are also about recognising people and careers, more than tracks and projects. We knew we had to have prizes for Best Producer and Best Designer, the latter of which was a readers' vote from our e-newsletter competition last November. But this is *Classic Pop*, and the genre would be nowhere without the maverick spirits that shake up the industry, sending everyone off in new directions. Musician or non-musician, the Maverick Spirit is a cornerstone of the genre. All of which leads to our biggest award, Lifetime Achievement. The criteria is simple: an artist who is capable of winning – either back then, right now or in the future – every single one of the other categories.

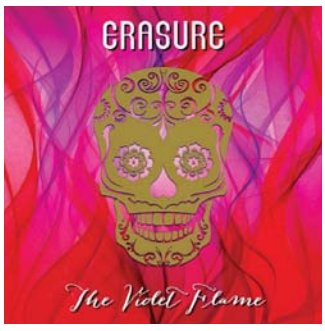
So that's the thinking behind all this. How did it all work out in practice? Please be seated and pray silence, for the awards are about to begin…



BEST ALBUM
THE VIOLET FLAME

ERASURE

HOLLY JOHNSON, SINÉAD O'CONNOR, ROYKSOPP & ROBYN AND DIETER MEIER OFFERED STRONG COMPETITION, BUT THE EFFORTLESS GRANDEUR OF ERASURE STOLE THE SHOW…



One of the reasons we wanted to award *The Violet Flame* for Best Album was that, for some reason, it sounds like such an optimistic record.
Yeah, very much so. It's weird, because when we're doing an album it's always only ever about what you're thinking at the exact time, so I must have just been in a really good mood when we were doing it. It was written around February 2013. I had just moved into Miami with my new partner and I think I was just clearing my head out, and it felt nice. It was like the life that I'd imagined for a long long time, or something you kind of knew inside.

It was very strange – when I first went to Miami in 1989 or 1990, I always had this funny feeling that I'd end up there. Not because I loved it or anything, I just feel very calm there, and we have a dog, which is great…

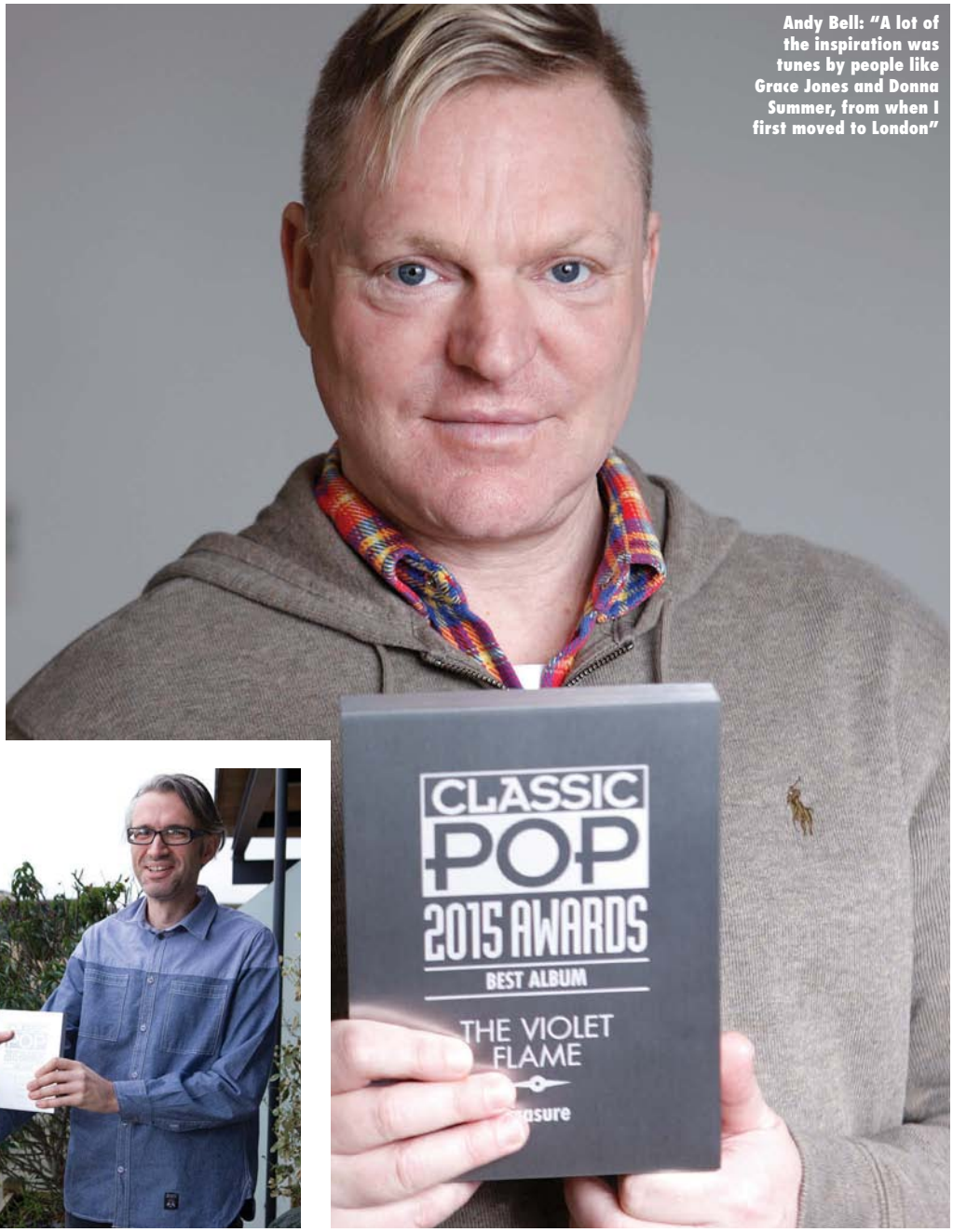
…dogs give you energy!
Honestly, I'd forgotten, because we grew up with dogs. Even though there were six children in the house, the dog was kind of the babysitter, really. I remember lying on the lawn with the dog, with your head on its belly and all that stuff!

So you live half the time in Miami and half the time in London now?
I do, I go backwards and forwards, and work takes us all over the place, so it works out quite neatly. Sometimes I feel like I wish it was a bit more conventional where you can stay in one place for a while. I'm in a civil partnership now and sometimes you think that because you're supposedly partners therefore you have to be together all the time, but we don't necessarily. You have all these supposed rules put into your head.

Also, with *The Violet Flame* I'd been begging Vince for years to do an album or a gig where we have him on the stage with a live sequencer playing all the way through, making sounds, creating sounds as he's there, and me just being there on the mic and toasting along. I think he's probably a bit nervous of doing that, so I think this album was the first tentative steps to making that happen one day. The lyrics kind of flew off, they came out quite easily, and I found that a lot of the inspiration was a lot of tunes that had been by inspiring people like Grace Jones and Donna Summer from when I first moved to London. So it was kind of the same feeling of being somewhere new.

Is there a noticeable difference between a UK Erasure audience and an American one?
Yeah, it's quite strange… it





Andy Bell: "A lot of the inspiration was tunes by people like Grace Jones and Donna Summer, from when I first moved to London"



depends on where you go. In the US we have – well, not pockets of resistance, but pockets of assistance. In San Francisco, for instance, we're really popular, and for some reason it's the same in Utah, in Salt Lake City, in Texas – which I think a lot of electro bands are – and in Chicago. It's strange how it has spread, because before it was supposedly much more homophobic, but we didn't really see much of it, really.

Now it seems much easier and I'm always taken aback by the amount of people that seem to know all of our songs in the US, including the new ones. I think, "how do you hear them?" They must hear them through their friends or on YouTube, because we're not really played on the radio. The audience depends on where you go.

What's the Erasure plan for this year?

There are plans afoot to release everything on vinyl, and there'll be a Record Store Day special. Myself, I'm just going to be doing *Torsten Part 2*, which follows a thing I did at the Edinburgh festival last year, and release a second track with Dave Aude.

And then after that you'll reconvene with Vince?

Yeah, hopefully by the end of this year. I said to him, you can come to Florida any time, and he wants to, and I think it would be really nice to just meet up and just write for us.

What were you listening to last year?

I don't really keep up with anything, really. I get to hear a lot of the American Top 40 because my partner has clubs in Tampa, so I hear a lot of that, you kind of get a bit saturated with it. At the same time I was working with Dave Aude in the US, who's a DJ, and he has all these people coming through his studio, so I've done some writing there with Meghan Trainor and Luciana, so you kind of feel like you're in touch. Not that I'm trying to be keep hip or anything, it's just that that's what was going on.

I suppose I've always been some way into club culture, although it's dropped off a lot for me, personally. I haven't really been out in London for a long, long time. I do get invited to a few things but I kind of have to muster up the courage to go there! I do get a bit nervous sometimes...

...because you think that certain things are expected of you?

I don't know, I think because I remember being out before when I was single – well, I wasn't single, I was living with someone, but I had my freedom – so I'd go out with my friend and basically we'd get drunk and kind of have a good time and stuff, but now it's more... I just feel you have to be more statesmanlike. I'm not really a statesman, but you can't be falling over all the time!

Finally, where are you going to keep your Best Album award?

I think I'm going to put it in my office along with some others. There aren't lots of awards in there, but the ones that are there are special.



Sophie Ellis-Bextor: "I thought, 'Right, let's do something different' – and what could be more different than a waltz about a spooky witch?"





BEST SINGLE
LOVE IS A CAMERA

SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR

LAST YEAR'S BEST SINGLES – CLEAN BANDIT, KATY B, NEON JUNGLE – OWED A MASSIVE DEBT TO NINETIES RAVE, BUT ONE FORGED A NEW PATH FOR THE ARTIST IN QUESTION…



Congratulations on winning our inaugural Best Single award...
Thank you very much, and what a heavy award it is too, very weighty! It's a good job I don't win too many of these things – I'd need to reinforce my floor.

Where will you keep it?
Well, the nice-looking ones go in the playroom, actually. Up on a high shelf. It'll be in there where we have our record player and our DJ stuff.

You mentioned in *Classic Pop* issue 10 that *Love Is A Camera* set the template for the your album. Can you elaborate?
The loveliest thing about *Love Is A Camera* is that I never try and write singles, but that one is probably the antitheses of that because I got together with Ed Harcourt and I thought "Right, let's write a song that's completely different to the things I normally do". And what could be more different than something in waltz time that's about a spooky witch, a fairy tale. We had such a lovely time working together – it all flowed so naturally, we shared a similar vision. After that I thought, wow, if we can create that kind of landscape in music, let's make an album that has that. At first we didn't know what we were going to do, we thought we were just going to make an album together, so it was a bit of an experiment because he's a family friend, and that was the first time we'd properly worked together.

What are your plans looking like for 2015?
Ed and I have done three songs for the album so far. I'm very happy to be working with him again, and I'm happy he wants to do it too. I don't know how to describe what we're doing, but it's kind of a little bit *Wanderlust* and a little bit what I used to do. I think it will be released next year, because I'd like to take my time both writing it and recording it. I'm not under too much pressure, that's the wonderful thing about being the record company, too.

With *Wanderlust* you were starting out running your own label. It's turned out pretty well...
It was a different kind of thing, there was a lot more risk involved, but it feels a bit more of a family process because you can really feel the mechanism and the machine. Everybody, everything they're doing, you can see it, it's quite a transparent thing. I do think it's a lot easier to start a label if you're in a career, as I was, rather than starting out. You've got a lot of benefits that way. But I've loved the freedom of it and it's felt quite grown up, more of an adult approach.





Charli XCX: "I can never recognise a hit. I always just know when I think a song is cool or not"



BREAKTHROUGH ARTIST
CHARLI XCX

2015

ULTRA-POP IS ALIVE AND WELL, BUT MERGING THE COOL OF ARTISTS LIKE FOXES AND LORDE WITH RESPECT FOR THE PAST AND FEARLESS FUTURISM BECAME THE JOB OF ONE PERSON…



Charli, congratulations on winning our Breakthrough Artist. It's well-deserved – your new album *Sucker* (reviewed in *Classic Pop* issue 15) is a hit, you're on tour with Katy Perry – but we first got into your music when you rapped over Art of Noise's *Moments In Love* on the Super Ultra mixtape in 2012...

Thank you! I've always been into Art of Noise and obviously that's one of their most famous songs, and I remember it had a really weird music video with ice-skating tortoises and stuff… bizarre. So I've always been really into that particular track and I wanted to do something over the top. I wondered why no one else had done it – it's such a great instrumental.

I know you're a fan of Kate Bush: we gave the Best Concert award last issue for her Before The Dawn shows because it was such a foregone conclusion...

I didn't go to that concert unfortunately, I wish I had. I think I was in America at the time, but yeah, it would have been amazing to have finally seen her live. When I was making my first record, *True Romance*, I was really inspired by *The Sensual World*. She's incredible, her voice, and all of the production on that album – I found it really inspiring. So, yeah, of course I would love to collaborate with Kate Bush!

You're current in the charts with *Doing It* featuring Rita Ora, which is a bona fide anthem. Do you ever write a song and think "yes, I've got an anthem here"?

Never, never… I can never recognise a hit! I always just know when I think a song is cool or not. What's funny is that I wrote that song in Trevor Horn's house, at his place in Bel Air – Trevor, of course, being one of the founders of Art of Noise. We were renting it and I had a big house party there which we didn't tell anyone about, although they later found out, and then the day after, we wrote *Doing It*. We got into trouble but it was worth it, a good song came out of it.

"I see music in colours," Stephen Duffy once sang – and we hear you do too?

I do, it's called synesthesia and I think a lot of artists have it. When I'm making music I see colours, basically. This last album, *Sucker*, was all reds and pinks. And then *Boom Clap* was silver, and on my first record it was much more muted purples, bruised, more subtle. So it's really when I hear sounds or when I'm creating that it happens, and it really helps my lyrics.



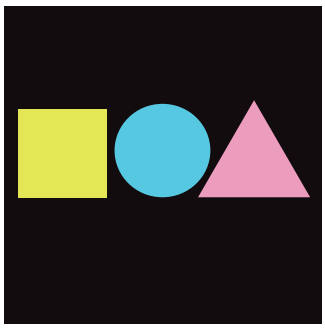




BEST COVER VERSION
SMALLTOWN BOY

JIMMY SOMERVILLE

GO WEST TORE THROUGH SEX ON FIRE AT THE FESTIVALS AND LORDE TRANSFORMED EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD, BUT ONE COVER BROUGHT TEARS TO OUR EYES…



We know presenting you with Best Cover Version for your beautiful piano/vocal take on *Smalltown Boy (Reprise)* is controversial, because in some ways you're covering yourself....
I think in the end what it comes down to is whether it's a good cover, or not. If it was shite, then no… but the reaction to it was just really amazing. And I think what it showed people was where I'd come from, and where I am now. And to be able to reconnect with the song and what it's actually about. In some respects it's not my song anymore, it's its own entity, it continues to do what it said on the tin 30 years ago and appeals to people on a very emotional and a very honest level. It still does that.

It is a particularly emotional rendition...
I think because it was stripped to the bare essentials, and it's a very honest, genuine heartfelt cry from the heart. That's what I did all those years ago and I think that's why it was so massive and appealed across the board – it tugged at people's heart strings.

How rehearsed was it? It feels like just one take.
Yeah, we set it up, we went to RAK Studios and we used the big live room there. There was some young film makers that my management know who just had little hand-held cameras, and so we went through it three or four times and they just recorded different angles, and that was it, really.

Have there been any other people's cover versions of your songs that you've liked?
When you YouTube or Google *Smalltown Boy* there's so many different versions, it's quite funny. There's one that I really love and it's mad – I forget the name – it's a German band and it sounds like the devil has possessed the very essence of the song. It's just got this grungy hard thing and the voice is growling "You leave in the morning..." and you think, well, that's a different approach!

Is there a cover you've done yourself where you've thought, wow, this one really gels, I'm never going to stop singing this?
I think *Mighty Real* does that for me, because when I do that I connect very much to a very obvious and very emotional thing for me, the gay politics. So that really hooked me into the song. I also love to sing *I Feel Love* when it moves into *Johnny Remember Me*. I think it's very underestimated as a cover because it was always kind of pop electro, almost quite a new wavy, punky thing because, vocally, it's not



Jimmy Somerville: "The reaction to it was really amazing. In some respects it's not my song anymore, it's its own entity"

brilliant and even the sounds can actually be quite painful. There's quite a chaotic element to that track as well because Marc Almond came in and we didn't rehearse it or anything, we just decided to just go for it and see what happened. When we added *Johnny Remember Me*, it changed what the lyric was about. It became like a three-way relationship. There's these two men singing the song but then there's this other man they're both singing to. That was pretty radical for the day.

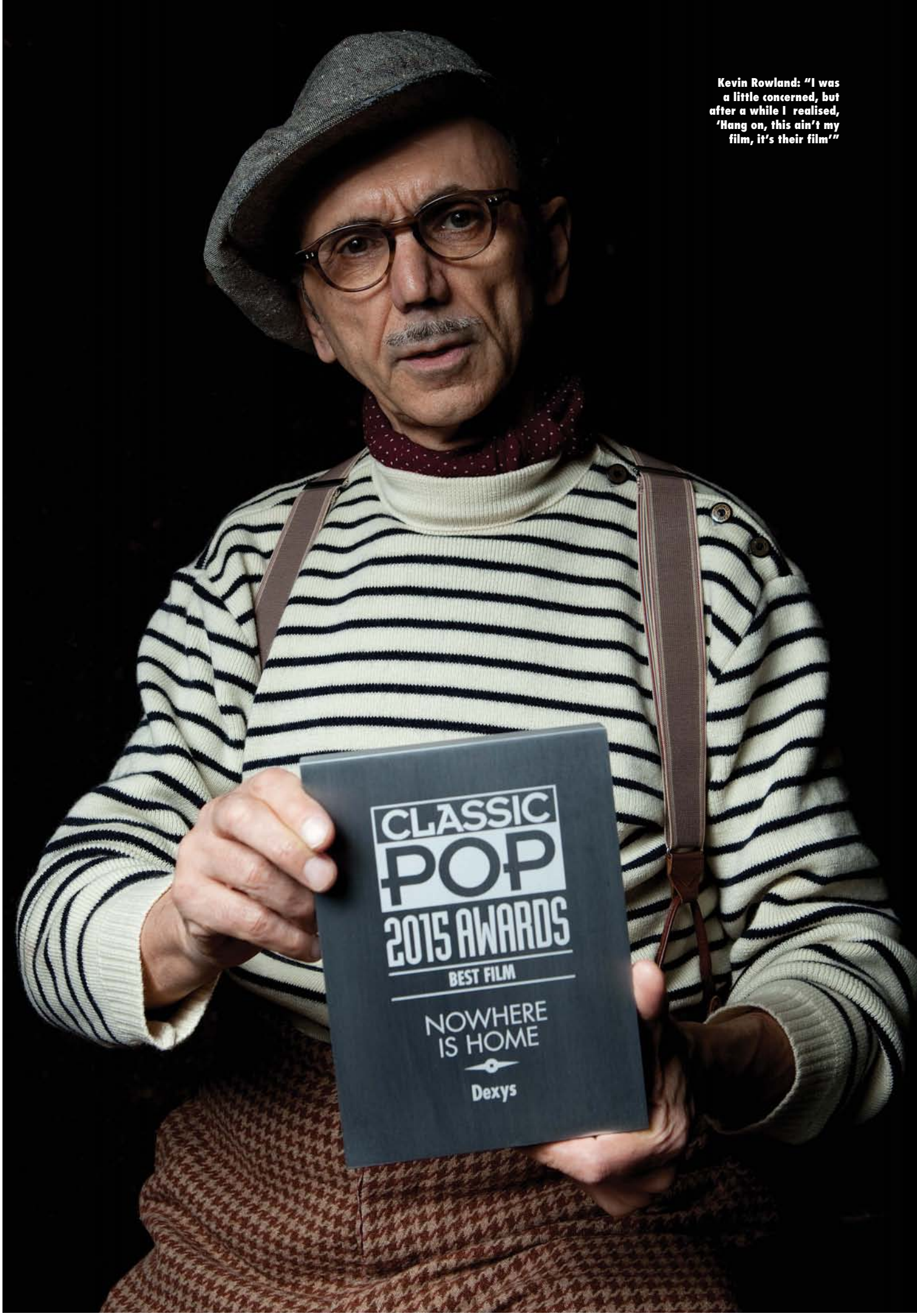
We talk in this issue about your new album of new disco that draws from the past and speaks of the present. The term 'disco' is a bit like 'pop' – it comes with baggage...
That's the thing, the name itself, disco, is of a time and a place because now everything has evolved. But no one suddenly thought that about rock music; when it first evolved in the Fifties, nobody was suddenly looking for a new name for that. I just think we so easily look for ways we can box something, pigeonhole it, so that then we can dismiss it.

It's the mission for *Classic Pop*, to get away from the thinking that just because we first started liking pop as children in the Eighties, anything about pop and about the Eighties has to be in some way childish.
I think you've tapped into something important. I was looking on YouTube at the new Giorgio Moroder and Kylie Minogue song. I was looking at Kylie and thought, you know what, you missed a great opportunity to be the woman you are, the age you are, to be who you are, doing pop. Stop writhing around showing your arse, trying to compete with that younger generation. Be an elderly stateswoman in pop. Why can't you do that?

I'm not sure Madonna's managed it yet...
Well, she put her legs behind her neck. Do you know what? You don't need to show us that.

Actually, she did manage it with *Ray Of Light*...
Because she looked so ordinary in the video, she was just casual. I believe that song is of such quality and it's so different from anything she's done that there was a real maturity in that, something different in it that allowed her to relax and actually just to perform.

The thing about these names, styles, disco, pop... it's a long battle.
A few years before I was in Bronski Beat I was obsessed by Fifties rockabilly, but that influenced what I did later. I would never have done *I Feel Love* with *Johnny Remember Me* if I hadn't listened to Fifties music. And I think for a younger generation who are doing pop, if they get access to a magazine like this, and access to old records, they can listen and be influenced by something. There's nothing wrong with being influenced by something from the past – it gives you an insight to what you can do in the future.



Kevin Rowland: "I was a little concerned, but after a while I realised, 'Hang on, this ain't my film, it's their film'"





BEST FILM
NOWHERE IS HOME

DEXYS

GREAT MUSIC FILMS HAVE HEARTFELT SONGS, STRONG OPINIONS AND A FEELING THAT ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN – AND NOWHERE IS HOME DELIVERED ALL THIS AND MORE…



***Nowhere Is Home* documents the group's nine-night West End run at the Duke of York's Theatre, and there's a moment where you say you had to walk the streets for about two hours afterwards each night just to come back down to earth. Did you actually do that?**

If not a walk, I would have to go somewhere quiet and be on my own. I would try to socialise sometimes but I would feel I couldn't really do it, I'd be in a different place to even the other guys in the band. I don't know, I just needed to do that, really. I had to live like a monk on tour because if I'm singing for two hours a night and running around the stage, I've got to be fit. You can't strain your voice, you can't talk in crowded rooms or over music… the quickest way to strain your voice is talking over music. I learned it and I realised that, hang on, this is what I've got to do. After those shows I didn't see anybody, I would just steam my vocal chords after the show, get changed, go straight home. But yeah, emotionally, it did take a lot out of me. I couldn't just slip back into normal life after that.

When you were doing the shows, was there always a plan to film them?

Not really. I wanted to, but our previous manager was kind of… I said to him, "Look, this is going to be a really good show, can we get someone to film it?" He went "Yeah, yeah…" And then about a week before the shows, at rehearsal, I asked again, and he said no. Shaun, our keyboard player, overheard him and said his mates would film it, and they turned out to be BAFTA winner Kieran Evans and Paul Kelly.

So they came down to the first soundcheck. I saw them wandering around, analysing angles, messing with light… I went up to them and said "We'll perform it, you film it."

You didn't give them any direction at all?

A few little things in the editing, but really no. I mean I didn't know them, so I was a little bit concerned. I didn't know what they would do. I was worried they would play it to the lowest common denominator instead of making a really good film about what we're about now. I had no idea they were fans of Dexys until I read it afterwards. They said they felt this great responsibility to capture it and to make it right. I'm very happy with the job they did. After a while I realised, "Hang on, this ain't my film, it's their film." I had the veto, and if there was something I hated or something I really wanted in then I could have said so, and on one or two occasions I did that, just little things. But really it was their film.

So you realised you were in quite safe hands?

I didn't really know for sure until I saw it. They were editing it and I was like "Look, I can come down to the editing suite if you want," and they went "Not yet, not yet." I said "Look, this is a very weird position for me to be in because I'm a control freak, and everything with Dexys' name on it I want to be really good, and usually I'll take control of that and take responsibility for that. This is going out with Dexys' name on it and I've got very little say in it." So it was weird situation for me. And they understood that, and then they showed me a rough and all three of us worked on it from there.

Great music films are sadly few and far between. If only there were more like this…

I know, I'm surprised it didn't get more attention, really. We're really happy with it, and it will be on TV later this year.

You say in the film that the *One Day I'm Going To Soar* album was a chance to do things you'd waited years to do.

We put everything in that we wanted to say… there's so many ideas in there that came up over so long. I'd been filing them away on demos, notes and documents for years.

What are your plans for Dexys and 2015?

I've got all sorts of ideas, but who knows what's going to happen? It took 25, 26 years making the last one. Might as well take another 15 or 20 for the next one! We'll see.

Where are you going to keep your award? You told our photographer it might go on the telly…

It probably won't, 'cos I've got a wall-mounted telly, so that's probably not a good idea! I'll be honest, I haven't got one award or any gold discs or anything. Not because of ego, I've got plenty of ego, but I don't think creatively it's good for me to be looking at awards of previous work, because I want to be in the moment.

Each record is a miracle. The film is a miracle. It could have turned out rubbish. It didn't… it turned out really well. When the shows go well they're a miracle, the album was a miracle. Whether we have another miracle or not, I don't know. Who knows?



BEST REISSUE
SOUL MINING

THE THE

A HARD-FOUGHT CATEGORY, WITH DELUXE EDITIONS OF GRACE JONES AND FRANKIE VYING WITH LOW KEY BUT LONG-OVERDUE DREAM ACADEMY AND BLUE RONDO RETROSPECTIVES....



The The's *Soul Mining* box set stole the show for us last year, partly because of the music but partly because it was a joy to see Matt Johnson digging back into the heritage of The The. Matt, how did the project come about?
The idea originated from my ex-manager, Cally, during the 30th anniversary of *Soul Mining*. He remains a good friend and also manages the Nick Drake Estate. He'd recently completed a series of vinyl boxed sets of Nick Drake's catalogue and these had gone down very well, so he suggested that I may do the same with my back catalogue. He approached Sony, who were very excited about the idea, and then we moved forward quite quickly – although not fast enough to get it released during the 30th anniversary year itself, so it was a 31st anniversary set!

The box set was the first time you've looked back and reissued material... how did that feel?
That's not strictly true as I did remaster all of the albums – *Soul Mining, Infected, Mind Bomb* and *Dusk* – in 2002 and put together the *London Town* CD box set at the same time. Those reissues were done in New York with my old friend Howie Weinberg, the legendary mastering engineer. But, in retrospect, I think we probably over-compressed the recordings. It was the height of what was known as the 'Loudness Wars' and everyone was over-compressing their music to help make it pop out against the opposition on the radio, as all music was just getting louder and more compressed. A negative spiral, as it squeezed all of the life out of recordings. This new remaster was far more sympathetic to the original and was done with Alex Wharton at Abbey Road. He's a lovely guy, and I mastered my new *Hyena* soundtrack with him too.

You mention in the sleevenotes that, when making the album in 1983, a second trip to record in New York, "for one reason or another, rapidly descended into outrageous hedonism." What were those reasons... and exactly how hedonistic was it?
There was a lot of drug-taking, and one of my ex-manager (and Some Bizzare label founder) Stevo's 'cures' for jet lag would be – upon arriving in New York – to go out partying and get as trashed as humanly possible in the shortest possible time. The trouble was that I was in the studio just a couple of days after arriving and was really in no fit state to be recording. Poor Mike Thorne, my producer at the time, must



Matt Johnson: "Thank you to *Classic Pop*. The award goes to everyone who worked on the *Soul Mining* anniversary box set"

have wondered what on earth was wrong with me as I'd been so out of it on Hawaiian grass that to help 'sober me up' Stevo handed me some ecstasy and then, when that didn't work, some Quaaludes!

Obviously I couldn't continue recording and became quite frustrated. Stevo and I then ceremoniously smashed up our hotel rooms (duly charged back to my account by CBS!), rented a large car and decided to drive to the most dangerous part of America which, by general consensus in those days, seemed to be East Detroit. So, off we went, via Niagara Falls, Toronto and various other towns, a car loaded up with drugs and misbehaviour all the way. At one point Stevo asked to drive. It was foggy and wet, we'd been on a major highway for hours and I was tired, so I pulled over and let him take the wheel. It was not until we were up to about 80mph – with Stevo screaming with childish delight – that he gleefully confided he'd never even driven a car before in his life! You can imagine my state of mind when the speedo started to touch 100mph!

What can we expect from The The in 2015?

Although my profile has intentionally been very low for the past decade and a half, I've recently been working harder – and with greater creative satisfaction – than at any point in my career. First project for 2015 is the soundtrack to my brother Gerard's new feature film, *Hyena*. It's the strongest soundtrack I've done so far, and we're also releasing a vinyl version through the Death Waltz Recording Company as well as a CD/book version through my Cineola company. I'm finishing several other soundtracks for release too, including a series of Scandinavian and Turkish films I scored, and I'm in the middle of making a political documentary film.

The question I get asked the most is what about a new The The album and tour. Part of the problem for me is that the person people want to see just doesn't exist any more. I'm a completely different person to the one who wrote and recorded those early albums and played on those world tours. I can understand people's nostalgia as I'm nostalgic about certain things myself: I drive a 42 year old car, ride a 78 year old bicycle and type words on a 75 year old typewriter. But in terms of my own career I just cannot become one of those revival acts, endlessly performing concerts and cover versions of myself for the money. It's vital for me to have something fresh to express before I release a new album of songs or perform live again. That said, I am excited to say I'm finally about to start writing a new album of songs, although it won't be ready for release until 2016 at the earliest.

But thank you *Classic Pop* for recognising *Soul Mining* as the best reissue of 2014. I was lucky to have a great team of enthusiastic people working on it with me – both inside and outside Sony – so the award goes to everyone who worked on the *Soul Mining* anniversary box set.





BEST COMPILATION
40 YEARS OF DISRUPTIONS

VIRGIN RECORDS, PRESENTED TO MARTYN WARE

REAL WORLD RECORDS HIT ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY, ZANG TUUM TUMB ITS 30TH, BUT VIRGIN'S 40TH GAVE US SIX RETROSPECTIVES, FOUR OF WHICH FEATURED THE WORK OF DR MARTYN WARE…



Martyn, you're the musician this award really has to go to. You were the most featured artist on Virgin's 40th anniversary compilations, with tracks by The Human League, B.E.F, Heaven 17 and The Men. Was there a spirit of adventure when you were with the label?

Oh, Virgin was amazing. I need to rewind a few years to when we first met them. It was when myself, Ian Marsh and Ade Newton, who went on to form Clock DVA, had a ridiculous group that we invented called The Future. Essentially it was our first attempt at doing something that was meant to be for the record companies. We sent out an invite to them to come and hear 'The Future of Music'. It was really pretentious. But we got 12 meetings in two days, it was amazing! So we met every major label, 10 of which said "What is this? It's awful, go away." But two of them, although they weren't interested in signing us immediately, saw some potential.

The Future was pretty edgy stuff to be honest, but the two labels who took us seriously were Virgin and Island, and by coincidence they were the two labels that we were most interested in signing for because they seemed to be the most forward-looking. *Being Boiled* then became an accidental hit on Fast Records, thanks to John Peel playing it a lot and just word of mouth, and all the record companies were sniffing around. We were getting courted by all sorts from Fiction Records up to EMI to Island, but really the one we wanted was Virgin, largely because they had this artist-facing philosophy.

And they allowed you to be many artists at once. Tell us about the League off-shoot, The Men...

When The Human League first signed to Virgin, we were very clear that we wanted to take different approaches because we had a very eclectic taste in music. On the one hand we'd do something like *Dignity Of Labour* which was experimental and soundscape and electronic, which they accommodated us with; on the other hand, we were also massive fans of disco. So we said, "Look, we've got so many ideas to experiment with, but we can't do anything that's not totally electronic under the name of The Human League or the whole thing is blown, so we're going to invent an alter ego so we can use real instruments."

We thought we owed it to ourselves to try a proper disco record 'cos we all loved it. At that time you couldn't imagine anything less trendy than disco. It was persona non grata in the world of music, but we loved it. We could see the provenance from the black gay scene in New York and we were not having this white dumbed-down version of disco, because we loved funk, it's what we listened to. I know it probably didn't show in a lot of things, but it did in The Men. It was an experiment, and why not? Who knows – with the resources of Virgin it could be an accidental hit. It wasn't, but I'm still proud of it. I think it still sounds great.

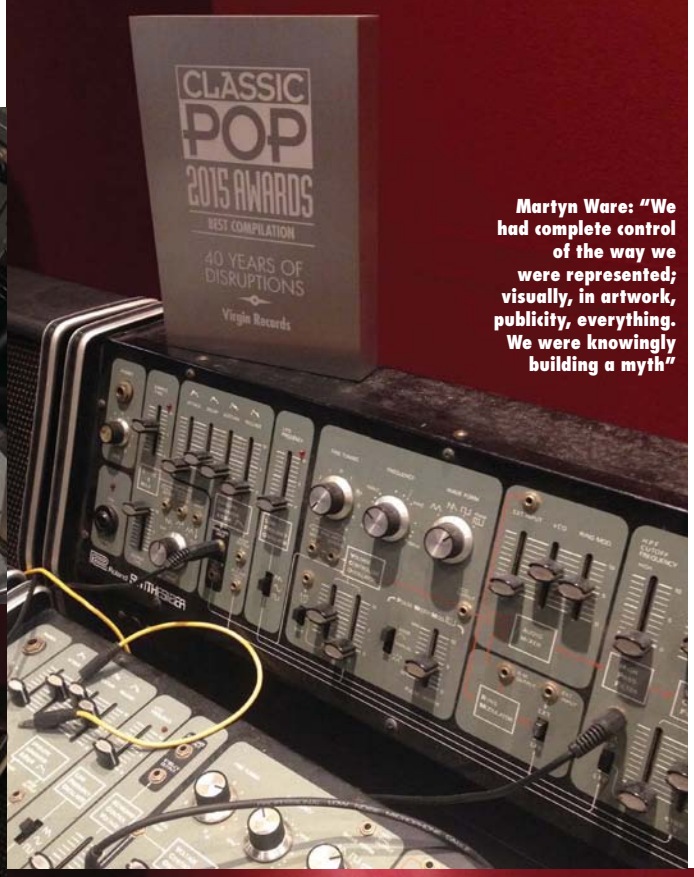
When we signed to Virgin we said – with our Sheffield bolshiness – "Look, your job is to sell what we give you. We know what we're doing and that is presumably why you signed us. If you don't trust us then don't sign us." So we always had this relationship saying "we will not accept any A&R interference in what we present to you. You are not allowed into the studio while we're making it, we will play it to you when it's finished and we're happy with it."

I actually carried that through into my production career as well because I just said "If you're employing me, you have to trust me. If you don't trust me, don't employ me." End of story. And that's actually why I gave up my concerted production career round about the end of the Nineties because they wanted control too much. I can't have creativity by committee.

They were happy to accept that and they were happy to have enshrined in the contract that we had complete control of the way we were represented: visually, in artwork, publicity, everything. To us, we were knowingly building a myth. Myth is probably too fancy a word, but we were building an integrated artistic concept and if they were just going to farm it out to the art department, they'd end up doing the same old shit. We couldn't stop them doing that abroad which is one of my big regrets, so some of the American covers of our stuff are so terrible it's quite awesome. And then they'd do things for the Japanese market that were kind of cute. But we had the right to control over it in the UK and Europe, so we used it.

We'd had that control right from the start when we did *Being Boiled* on Fast Records: we designed the cover, we did our own fanzine. How we presented ourselves was everything, the content was almost secondary. I lived half the time for the past 20 years in Venice and there's a great Italian phrase, "la bella figura". It means putting on a good show. You might be as poor as a church mouse, but in Italy it matters how you present yourself, it's a dignity thing. To us, it's not a chip on your shoulder thing about coming from a very working class background, it's just making the best of what you've got.



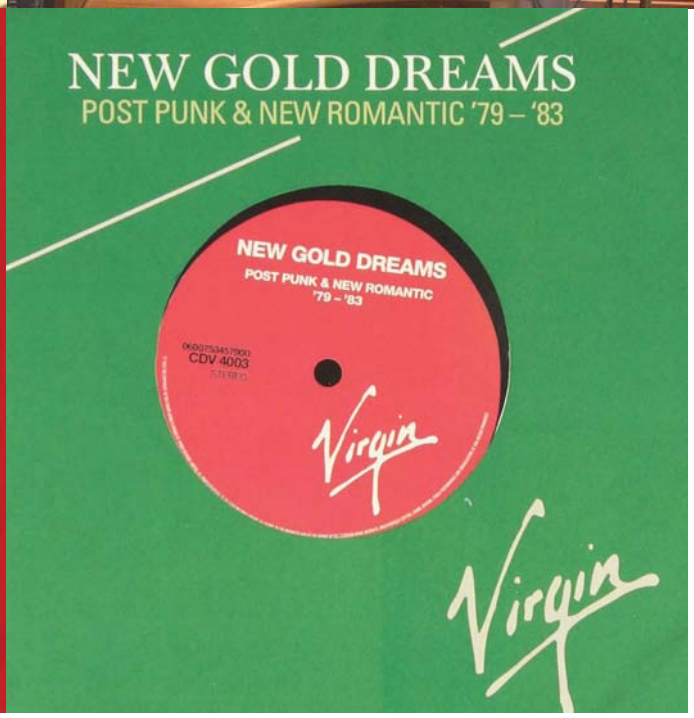


Martyn Ware: "We had complete control of the way we were represented; visually, in artwork, publicity, everything. We were knowingly building a myth"











Getty Images

CLASSIC POP 2015 AWARDS
BEST PRODUCER
TONY VISCONTI

BEST PRODUCER
TONY VISCONTI

2015

2013'S THE NEXT DAY CONTINUED HIS LONG STORY WITH DAVID BOWIE, BUT IT WAS TONY VISCONTI'S 2014 WORK – BOTH ON STAGE AND ON RECORD – THAT HAD US CAPTIVATED...



Tony, congratulations! One of our favourite albums of 2014 was *International Blue* (as profiled in Issue 14) as it brought lounge and light music into the present day...
Thank you, Ian. It is indeed an honour. I had already worked with Stephen Emmer on his lovely album called *Recitements*. That is a must-have album if you like cinematic music combined with some of the greatest poetry and prose of literary history. Really, it is its own genre, a unique one-off concept. We worked with some great artists, past and present, reciting the poems to Emmer's lush musical landscapes.

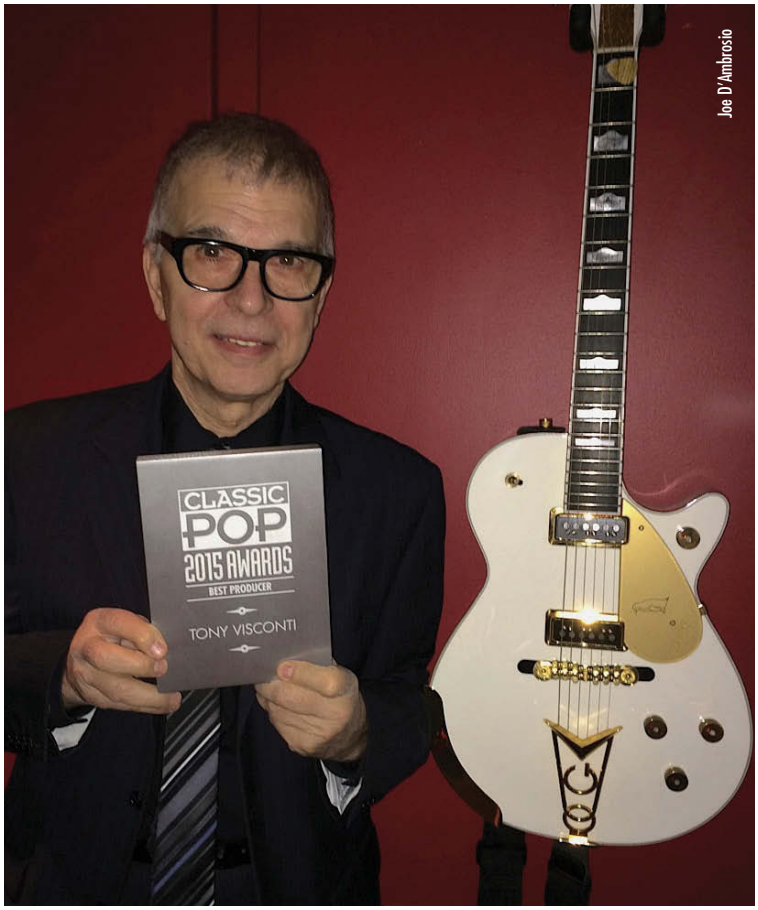
Then Stephen brought another entirely new concept to me, *International Blue*. This time he collaborated with four contemporary singers – including Midge Ure and Glenn Gregory – to co-write and sing in a kind of style that recalls Scott Walker and Frank Sinatra. Again, this new opus seems to be a genre all unto itself. The backgrounds are again very lush and cinematic. But the singing, oh, pure honey! What great voices I had the privilege to work with.

I love all the songs, but particularly love *Blown Away, A Break In The Weather* and *Sleep For England*. This is one of the best projects I have been a part of in recent years. We played the songs to about 15 music journalists in Abbey Road, and at the end one of them stood up and said something to the effect of, "I think I speak on behalf of my colleagues when I say that this is the most incredible thing we've heard in years." I was very nervous prior to this but I wanted to do cartwheels after I heard the journalist's speech.

One of my favourite moments from your discography is Prefab Sprout's *The Gunman and Other Stories*...
I am very proud of that album. It was really just Paddy and myself with his brother playing bass. Despite the small team, it wasn't without drama and some conflicts. Paddy had programmed the entire album in MIDI – on an old-school Atari computer, I think – and I was working on Logic on a Mac. It wasn't an easy conversion, quite bumpy in fact, but we finally got all the info into my computer. Paddy had worked for ages on his arrangements and I stuck to them faithfully, but I wanted live musicians to play some of the parts and only use some of the programmed bits from Paddy. I liked the results immediately but it was kind of hard for Paddy to let go at first.

We had some really great musicians come into my home studio in upstate New York, too, including Richie Morales

Tony Visconti: "*International Blue* seems to be a new genre all to itself. But the singing – pure honey. What great voices I had the privilege to work with"



Joe D'Ambrosio

on drums and the Scorchio string quartet that played on David Bowie's *Heathen*. We had the banjo picker from the film *Deliverance* come in too. The hardest part for Paddy, though, was vocals. I think he was amazing, but he didn't like singing complete takes of songs – he was used to singing a line at a time in his home studio. He was really a-kickin', a-cussin' and a-spittin' about this but, in the end, wow! He pulled the vocals off beautifully.

I love the underlying theme of the American Wild West – I know it's a passion with lots of British artists. My good friend Ralph McTell alludes to it in many of his songs too. My favourites from *The Gunman...* are *I'm A Troubled Man, Streets of Laredo, Cornfield Ablaze, When You Get To Know Me Better* and the crazy *Farmyard Cat.* But the rest are beautiful, especially the title song.

Our Lifetime Achievement award winner is Adam Ant. You worked with him in 1985 on *Vive Le Rock*...

I'm wary when people warn me that an artist is 'difficult' to work with. These so-called difficult artists are the ones I love, most dearly, to work with. Adam Ant is a very, very smart artist. You have to work at his speed and try and understand him. I spent more time listening than talking with him. His early singles were like nothing ever heard before. The chanting, the tribal drums and the leftfield subject matter were so refreshing. Then when you saw those first videos and even the *Top Of The Pops* performances, wow, he was really, really, different. By the time I finally got to work with him those glory days were behind him and yet he was inventing something very new and exciting with *Vive Le Rock*.

I loved the *Apollo 9* single we made. The lyrics were incredibly wacky, the kind of euphoria you have when you realise you're going to fly into outer space. I caught the Welsh word 'tupsin' (crazy) in the pre-chorus and Adam confirmed he learned it from his Welsh grandfather; I learned it from my Welsh wife, Mary Hopkin.

I also think the deep tracks on the album, *Scorpio Rising, No Zap* and *Razor Keen* were amazing – there are no fillers. I thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent on this album with Marco Pirroni and his vintage Gretsch White Falcon guitars, Burundi drumming expert Bogdan Wiczling on drums and Chris Constantinou on bass and flute. What a cracker of a band! Sadly we didn't have a lot of backing from the public and the album didn't do very well in the charts. It is still one of my best albums, and later it became highly praised.

You worked with Chris again last year on stage for *The Man Who Sold The World* with Glenn Gregory on vocals, too. Our Best Compilation winner, Martyn Ware, was saying that Glenn was out of his comfort zone on vocals, but thriving on it...

If Glenn was out of his comfort zone, I didn't know it. It was so nice to have Chris join Holy Holy, Glenn and myself on stage at the Shepherds Bush Empire. How do I rate Glenn as a singer? Oh, very highly, lots and lots, deep respect! He blew my mind on *International Blue*, and when I finally met him he wound me up with a very uncomfortable story about how I first met his wife in the back of a limo on Kensington High Street! I loved him after that.

He was my first choice for a singer for the Bowie show, and luckily he wanted to do it. Glenn is a big man with a deep voice, so we had to drop the keys for him. I had to tune down my bass a whole step because a lot of the original parts I played depended on open strings. The guitarists James Stevenson and Paul Cuddeford had to do the same. It was a blessing in disguise because that album was dark in the first place but the lower keys made it sound even darker.

It was great to play with Woody Woodmansey for the first time in decades. We were the only two in the show that were on the album. I am so excited that we are going to tour again in the UK and Ireland this coming June, and we are doing four shows in Japan immediately afterwards. For me, it was a great fulfilment because this album was never performed live in its entirety. After we finished it, the band broke up and we all went our separate ways. Personally, I had to assure myself I could still play those parts. I practiced almost everyday for more than two months. Those original parts were hard!



BEST DESIGNER
PETER SAVILLE

2015

HE'S OFTEN CITED AS THE DESIGNER'S DESIGNER, BUT NOW WE CAN GO ONE BETTER: PETER SAVILLE IS THE BEST DESIGNER OF 2015, AS VOTED BY CLASSIC POP READERS…



Peter, congratulations. Readers voted not only for your work with Factory, Joy Division and New Order, but also for Peter Gabriel and OMD. There's so much we could talk about – and a full Pop Art special is in the works for a future issue – but who, or what, inspired you in the first place?

My inspiration was the commentary that I wanted to make on my times. I was making record covers as propositions as to how I would like to see the world. I understood designs as the interface between art and – we could say – reality…

In the UK particularly, in my formative years, the Sixties – but into the Seventies and Eighties – contemporary art was not having any bearing on our real world, certainly not in comparison to the last 10 years. It was entirely unrelated, it was in its famous ivory tower. And as a teenager in the north of England, it was in an ivory tower that was not even anywhere on my horizon.

But as a young person in the north of England in the Seventies, it was the record cover that was the conduit of any kind of visual difference, any kind of avant garde proposition, any kind of visual cultural influence. For most of us it wasn't coming courtesy of family, school, education, or state… instead there was this phenomenal channel of visual stimulation, the record cover.

So being someone drawn to the milieu of visual progress, and new visual ideas, the record cover was the place that I gravitated to. Malcolm Garrett *[whose work as Assorted iMaGes was profiled in Classic Pop issue 12]* and Keith Breeden *[whose classics included ABC and Scritti Politti, before becoming a royal portrait painter]* and I were at grammar school together outside Manchester and would sit in the art room designing, illustrating… that's what we were doing as teenagers. We then went to art school together in Manchester. We were intelligent enough to understand the wider remit of graphic design, but we were focused on the cult dimension of it, of the record cover. It was an exciting prospect, we were being introduced to the canon of graphic design which has its origins in the early 20th century and that has its origins obviously in Modernism. Then, if you track graphic design back, Modernism leads you to Constructivism and other forms of reductive art. You get back to Malevich's Black Square quite quickly if you follow the 20th century history of graphics.

So we were introduced to the higher order of things, but we still wanted to do record



Peter Saville: "A new generation of young people were taking back their culture. As with any other rebellion, you could be part of it – if you were prepared to join in"

cover designs. Normally your opportunity to do that would be highly limited, it would be very unlikely that in any real world situation you would get there and within three or four years, but because punk started during our period at art school – Malcolm and I started in '74 and left in '78, and I seem to think punk's around 76 – there was a coup d'etat, a reordering in youth culture. Suddenly protagonist musicians, promoters, producers, organisers, managers were coming from your own world, your own generation. That was an unimaginable phenomenon, particularly as by the mid-Seventies, pop and rock had gone from rebellion to stadium, which is part of what precipitated punk. It's why I call it a coup d'etat: a new generation of young people taking back their culture from the industry which had captured it within the corporate structure.

So we decided to take it back and – just as with any other rebellion – you could be part of it if you were prepared to join in. Just be there, and you're part of it. So Malcolm and I were able to contribute to what was happening.

As result of the coup d'etat, Malcolm became involved with Buzzcocks and you, of course, became part of Factory Records. And thus begins the next chapter...

I refer to Factory as the autonomous opportunity. Everybody involved was part of an autonomous opportunity by the very nature of Factory. By virtue of it not being a business, not structured as a business, by not having any kind of business or profitability as a remit: just Tony creating a situation where people could just do what they wanted to do. The musicians were able to do what they wanted to do, autonomously. Martin Hannett did that. If you listen to Hooky and Bernard talk about *Unknown Pleasures*, you'll realise that Martin was entirely autonomous. He wasn't producing for them, he was producing for him.

The autonomous opportunity and how that was also mirrored within Joy Division, created a kind of autonomous zone for me to operate: there was no hierarchical order within Joy Division. Decisions were usually formed by default, very rarely did they ever agree on anything, so that nurtured my position. They couldn't agree: no one had more voting power than anyone else, so it would default to me. So I did *Unknown Pleasures* the way I wanted to do it, which was not as I had been instructed by the group. They thought it should be white on the outside and black on the inside and so on.

Also, very beautifully, their own inherent modesty also meant that they didn't have an agenda. So, "Do you want your name on the front?" "Not really." "Does anybody want the title on the front?" "Not bothered, really." All of those things of personality were not cool, particularly at that time. I had the freedom to do the cover the way I wanted, and – from that point on – I made record covers that I wanted to make.





MAVERICK SPIRIT
SIMON NAPIER-BELL

2015

WHO BETTER TO RECEIVE THIS AWARD THAN THE MAN WHO SET THE MAVERICK SPIRIT TEMPLATE: FROM DISCOVERING JAPAN TO STAGING WHAM!'S 1985 CONCERT IN CHINA…



Simon, congratulations. Who are the maverick spirits that have inspired you over the years?
I'm not sure about being inspired, it's more a matter of gaining reassurance that I'm not alone. You can't decide to have a nature like that, you're born into it. The greatest music business maverick spirit was Kit Lambert, The Who's manager. Utterly unorthodox and convention-confronting in every way. His determination to take The Who to the top and have them play in a world class opera house, The Met in New York, came from his father Constant Lambert, one of Britain's great classical composers and another maverick character. His huge success was *The Rio Grande* symphony. But his last work, the opera *Tiresias*, was slaughtered by the critics. After the first night reviews appeared, Constant drank himself to death in five days. Kit, just 14 at the time, was devastated but protected his emotions by deciding his father had effectively stuck two fingers up at the critics and created a triumphant exit to his life. Kit was determined to get his revenge on the music critics and, by getting The Who to write *Tommy*, then perform it at the New York Met, he felt he'd done so. Second prize for Maverick manager, should go to Andrew Oldham who invented the image of rock with the Rolling Stones. The third, maybe, to Malcolm McLaren for wreaking music business mayhem with the Sex Pistols.

In terms of the present day, do you see such a spirit still existing in the music world?
It's long gone. The industry is structured in such a different way. Perhaps the last world class mavericks were Ice T with Body Count and *Cop Killer*, and Ice Cube and Dr Dre with NWA. But since then Dre has been totally de-mavericked by money and Jimmy Iovine.

What can we expect now that you're working with Sinéad O'Connor?
Firstly, Sinéad is writing a book. The deal is with Penguin America and it's a substantial one. What a good writer she is. She has a totally natural talent for it – the construction, the flow, the vividness of description. It feels wonderfully Irish too, the way she phrases things. I'm certain it's going to be a huge bestseller. Gig-wise, she's busy – mainly festivals and one-off special events – and she's writing music too, both new songs and film music. So all in all, her life is pretty busy. I have an instinctive feeling that she hasn't yet reached her peak, and that sometime in the next couple of years she's going to top everything she's ever done.



Simon Napier-Bell (here with Blue Mercedes)

What was your take on the Sinéad/Miley debate that erupted last year?
No point taking sides with that one – just two people expressing their own points of view. Sinéad is certainly right in what she said. Miley, on the other hand, has the right to run her life as she likes.

***Wham! in China* was a monumental pop music moment. Do you think it left a legacy and opened doors, or was it just a miraculous one-off?**
Naturally, the very nature of the event made was a unique one-off – only one Western group could be the first ever to play in Communist China. Now, of course, anyone can go there – not as a direct result of Wham!, but nevertheless an indirect result. There was no question that Wham's performance – or rather, their simply being in China – was just one more subversive influence on urban youth in Beijing, and that it became a contributing factor to Tianamen Square and what happened there. And really, although it took time, it was the events of Tianamen Square which led to the easing of restrictions today on the import of all things Western, both commercial and cultural.

As well as Wham! You also managed Japan and Ultravox. How would you sum each one up now?
Wham! – supreme youthful self-confidence. Ultravox? Superbly crafted discontent. And as for Japan... I'd say breathtaking commercial disdain.

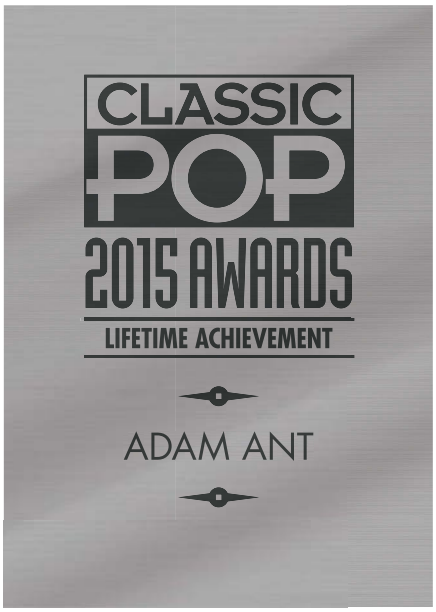
So you're *Classic Pop*'s inaugural Maverick Spirit. How does that feel?
Well, having a maverick nature is no more a choice than being gay, not so much an achievement as an inheritance. My father, grandfather, great grandfather all had the same non-conformist personalities. If you go back far enough you'll find Byron was a five-times great uncle. So this instinctive riling against expected behaviour runs in the family. Gordon of Khartoum is in there somewhere, too. The general in charge of British troops in Sudan, he refused to retreat when the British ordered him to – not because he was brave or patriotic but he had an Arab boyfriend he couldn't bear to leave behind. So he stayed and fought the Moslem hordes, and got slaughtered along with all his men. A true love story if ever there was one.

But it's good to get a music industry award. My first one! The only other award I ever got was the Gay & Lesbian Award for Media Person of the Year, in 2006, or around then. I think they were giving awards to any gay with a bit of a name, providing they agreed to turn up. At the last minute Paul O'Grady agreed to go too, so they changed my award to Senior Media Person of the Year, and gave Paul Junior Media Person of the Year. In my short speech after receiving the award I said, "I can't think why I deserve an award. All I've ever done is enjoy myself doing what amused me and had sex with people I fancied – and for that I get an award. Amazing!"



Adam Ant: "Thank you. I'm very flattered and very honoured. I'll probably be using it when I'm doing collage, to weight things down"





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Of all of our awards, this is the one with the most far-reaching. Congratulations on being our inaugural winner of Lifetime Achievement.
Thank you, I'm very flattered and very honoured.

Was there a tipping point where you thought, "this is it, music is going to be my lifetime"?
Yeah, at my debut gig at the ICA, I think it was 1977. I was studying at Hornsey College of Art and up until that point there'd always been a contest between music and graphics. I was in Bazooka Joe and playing bass and singing and learning to write, but when I saw the Pistols in November '75 I thought "Right, I can do this." I made my début at the ICA restaurant. I told them we were a C&W band and got slung out after doing *Beat My Guest*. I had a gimp mask and everything. I realised it was exciting and dangerous, and that I could do it.

Your track record for hit singles is impeccable, and your recent *Blueblack Hussar* album was acclaimed across the board. But are there any particular tracks you think have been overlooked, and are hidden gems?
I think the gems would be some album tracks, because when you're in the game, that circus of pop music, that chart system, you become focused on the albums. Every Adam And The Ants album had three hits singles on it: bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. But I didn't approach it that way. Even now I write 12 songs, 12 stories, and then you have to choose which one becomes a single.

Can't Set The Rules About Love is a good song. When you put a single and it doesn't go to No. 1, it gets overlooked very quickly. When a song becomes a hit, it throws all the criticism out the window. I do try – even if you're up against a ridiculous schedule to do an album a year, which we were on Sony, and most bands were – not to have filler. I don't think I've ever done filler.

My least favourite album, ironically, would be *Prince Charming* because we were rushed. I think it's as good as we had at the time but it could have benefited, A, from us all having a holiday and, B, from taking more time and then, C, the band would probably have stayed together. Is there filler on *Prince Charming*? No, but it really got f***ed off, review-wise. Not that that matters, but in those days it did matter. Even the look of *Prince Charming*: people love it, but I would have developed it a bit more, which, if I ever do revisit it in the future, I will be doing.

What are your plans for this year?
I'm going to revisit *Kings Of The Wild Frontier*. I'd say the closest parallel is when a film director gets a chance to get hold of all of the master tapes to their big film. So I will personally be mastering it. I'm not going to remix it, it's an analogue recording, but I'm getting it from the masters, the two-inch reels. It'll be a labour of love, like I did with *Dirk Wears White Søx*, so even people that bought it the first time round don't feel ripped off because they're getting something that's not improved but is a thing of beauty and is going to sit nicely with the original. With *Kings…*, the actual presentation is going to be quite extraordinary. Even kind of an improvement – not an improvement, but a different format from *Dirk*. So it's going to be the next project. I hope to do the same with *Prince Charming* and all the albums, because you want to look after them, especially with an album that's so popular and has already been produced en masse, like four million of them, five million or whatever.

I'm going to be playing live in Manchester on Record Store Day. I'm fully behind the independent vinyl effort – it's going to grow, it's growing all the time. This year I'm doing a double-A side of *Ant Music* and *Kings Of The Wild Frontier*, gold vinyl, remastered, a gatefold sleeve with the original sets of artwork. We took a lot of trouble tracking down a mint copy of the *Kings Of The Wild Frontier* single which I had in my collection. It does need doing from an artwork perspective and fortunately I was trained as a designer, so all the original artwork is all on file. My archive is quite extensive, because when you bring something out that hasn't been in the light for 25 years it has to be in perfect nick, to give you that special quality.

The *Classic Pop* awards are heavyweights in terms of gravitas, but also, literally, they're heavyweights! Where are you going to keep yours?
All my gold discs were at my mum's house until she decided to redecorate, so they're in storage. Ivor Novellos are in pride of place because they're for songwriting. All the rest of them are in display cupboards all over the place. But this one, because of the nature of it, I'll probably use it when I'm doing some collage, to weight things down. So I'll be using this every day. It will have a practical use.

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Mike Prior

Jimmy Somerville

BACK TO LIFE

BEHIND THE ANGELIC TONES OF BRONKSI BEAT AND COMMUNARDS, JIMMY SOMERVILLE ALWAYS HAD A TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP WITH SUCCESS AND EVEN HIS OWN MAGNIFICENT VOICE. BACK WITH THE MOST PERSONAL ALBUM OF HIS CAREER, JIMMY TELLS *CLASSIC POP* OF THE HARROWING MOMENT HIS WORLD FELL APART, THE CONFUSION OF STARDOM – AND THE CREATIVE REBIRTH HIS NEW LIFE HAS SPARKED…

JOHN EARLS

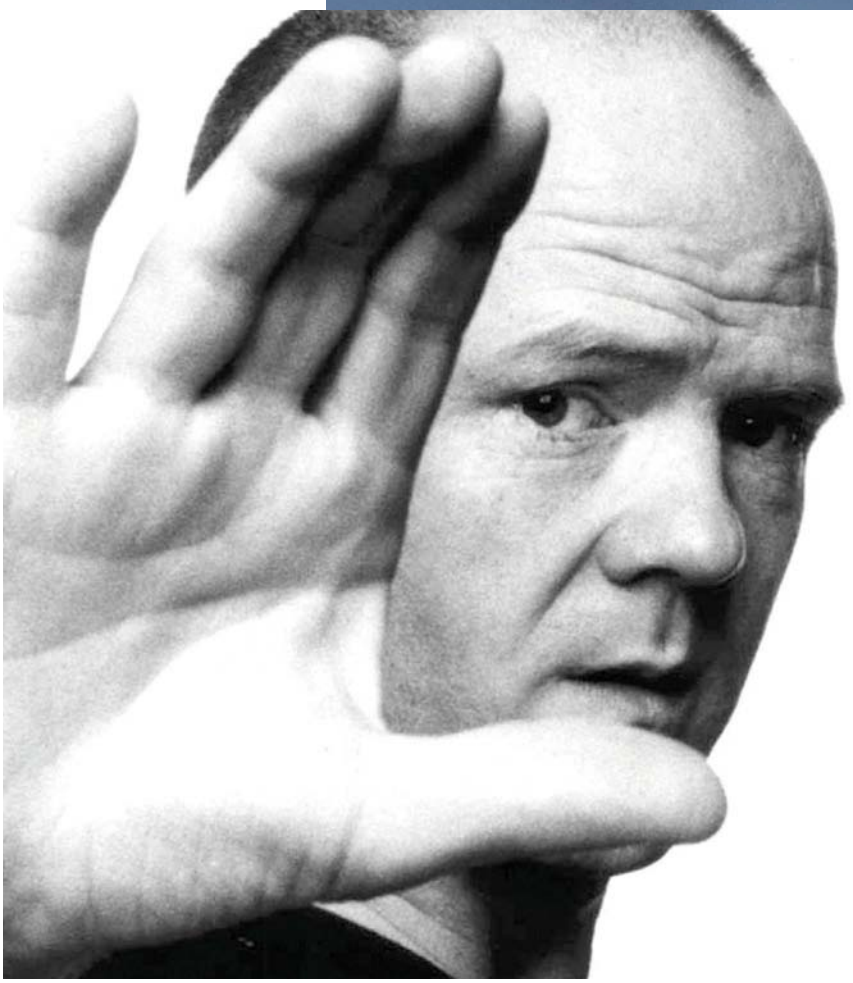
Three years ago, Jimmy Somerville turned 50. Since his gold-selling debut solo album *Read My Lips* was released in 1989, Somerville had intermittently released music but he'd never commercially recovered from walking away at the height of his fame in 1990 to go travelling for two years.

But he didn't really care and, by 2012, his life had bottomed out. Years of drug and alcohol abuse, coupled with a mental torment that made him despise his own talent and doubt his self-worth, meant Jimmy was close to death.

"I was totally self-destructive," says Somerville. "I knew that if I carried on the way I was, I was going to die. I was destroying myself. I had a moment of clarity where I thought 'Oh my God, there must be more to life than this.' I knew I had to believe in myself, but I was so trapped, I couldn't do it by myself. I had to have an intervention."

Family and friends saved him. "I'm very, very fortunate that I have people in my life who love me so much that they were determined I wasn't going to destroy myself. They saw what I was doing and they were determined to intervene to try to stop me dying, although I had to play my part too. They saved me and I got medical help."

Since then, Somerville has been sober, with milk in his coffee his only remaining vice – it affects his voice. "I didn't find it difficult to stop being so destructive," he says in his gentle Glaswegian accent. "I'd got to such a low place that I knew I had no option. Even when I was a kid, the things that got me through life were chaotic. But it took me a long, long time to realise I'm an addict. I was powerless over that addiction until I hit rock bottom.



"I've found a way through recovery to deal with it all and it works for me, it really does. To experience the natural highs of life now, with a real clarity and a different set of ideals… I could get evangelical, but I won't. But I've got a freedom now that I've never had before. And that's allowed me to go back to music."

The result is the magnificent *Homage*. As its title suggests, Somerville pays tribute to his disco roots and in doing so writes songs the equal of Bronski Beat's *Smalltown Boy* or Communards' *You Are My World*. Speaking at a functional meeting room at his manager's office on a north London industrial estate, dressed casually in jeans and blue hoodie, Somerville is lively company – funny, bright, and an attentive listener. Words tumble out of him passionately, whether talking about songwriting or his love of cycling, and it's clear that Somerville relishes life again.

Finally, that extends to realising how good a singer he is. It seems that the one person in Britain who didn't think Jimmy Somerville was a great singer was Jimmy Somerville.

"Once I started singing, I always felt uneasy," he shrugs. "To me, my voice didn't sound masculine. I thought that I sang like a girl because I'm gay. Every time I sang, it took away my masculinity. I totally battled against how I sang, and there was a lot of psychological worry which was down to my voice."

Then the hits started coming. "As much as I hated a lot of what came with being famous, part of me loved it all too," he admits. "To keep famous, I had to keep singing, and therefore I had to keep feeling emasculated. I was in a right mess, to be perfectly honest. I hadn't a clue why I wanted to be famous and I was scared of my voice."

That self-doubt extended to Somerville's songwriting. Even Bronski Beat's breakthrough wonder *Smalltown Boy*, one of the finest songs about finding yourself ever written, was deemed "embarrassing" by its singer. "I'd lost my feeling for it," he admits. "I was so arrogant, I thought that song had no worth. Every time someone said how much *Smalltown Boy* meant to them, I'd just squirm.

"I didn't believe in the song, so I couldn't see why others would. It was all a bit self-obsessive: 'Poor me, I can't feel it.' But now I can see the song has such longevity because it's a raw, emotional howl on top of this rigid electronic pulse."

By the time *Smalltown Boy* was released in 1984, Somerville was 23. He'd moved to London at 17, initially becoming a sex worker before working at Heal's furniture store for five years. "It was quite important that I'd had a life before Bronski Beat," he reflects. "The politics wouldn't have been there otherwise, and Bronski Beat were a band who were very much politics first and music second. Once I signed the devil's deal to be in the music industry and realised 'What have you done? You've just signed away your anonymity,' I had to get to grips with it. I quickly realised that at least it gave me a platform to speak about what I cared about."

Somerville quickly became a radical voice, but he was also conflicted about his talent and starting to indulge his addictions. "I'd fallen into pop stardom by accident," he smiles. "It wasn't something I'd craved. It fell into my lap, I didn't know what to do with it, so my response was to go round shouting 'F*** off!' I didn't do America, I turned down supporting Madonna…

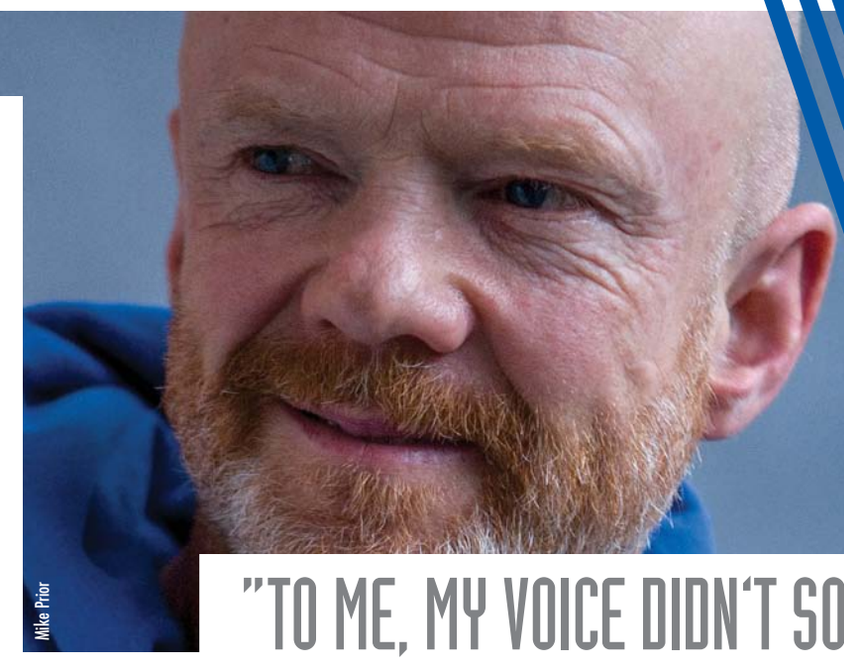
"My reaction to fame was quite bonkers, and that wasn't very good for anybody in a band with me. It was all about me, and I didn't care about anyone else's position. When I left Bronski Beat, I decided to tell

POP_UP Jimmy's falsetto was first heard on a film made by gay and lesbian teenagers, *Framed Youth* (it's on YouTube). He sang a poem which later became *Screaming* on *Age Of Consent*

JIMMY ON... RICHARD COLES

"I haven't read Richard's autobiography, *Fathomless Riches*. I told him: 'It's your truth, I can't change that. It's up to you.' I'm just not bothered. Richard has always admitted he's one for thinking 'Did that happen? I can't remember, so I'll just say that instead…' and go with the most entertaining version. He's such a fibber, Richard. He's terrible. He tweeted that Sarah-Jane Morris and I were at the BBC when I was at home, having my boiler mended! I was approached to do my autobiography, but they're such an indulgence. I couldn't do it – it would affect too many other people. I'd have to set up a forum called Well, Actually to allow people to respond: 'That part in your book where you said this? Well, actually…' I spent so much of my youth not thinking about consequences for other people. Now I do understand those consequences, so a book just doesn't come into the picture. It's simply not going to happen.

"I was really angry at Richard when he said he was joining the church. I told him 'Don't come near me.' I was so wrapped up in my own self-obsessed mayhem, I'd no idea where his story was heading. But I have a better understanding now. His life is on track too, he's very happy. That's all that matters."



Mike Prior

JIMMY ON... POLITICS

"At a very young age, I had an understanding of discrimination. My older brother was in the Army, and he married a black girl from Belize. Even at the age of six, seeing the difference in how people reacted to her because of the colour of her skin baffled me. It makes me so sad, but also determined to make people realise it's not acceptable behaviour.

"Sometimes I've been misguided and sometimes the way I've articulated my views has become confused, but my main drive is equality and the right for someone to live their life. No institution has the right to tell a man or woman who they can love.

"We live in fearful times, where there's such uncertainty about. It's an age where it seems to be acceptable for quite extreme violence to be someone's reaction to something they don't like. So much progress has been made with gay rights, like the freedom to marry, but I'm very aware that a lot of those freedoms have had to be legalised because there are a lot of people who don't care about legislation: if you're gay, then you're worth whacking over the head with whatever stick comes to hand. But we're in a position where it seems to be 'enough is enough'. Greece has a left-wing government, it looks like Spain will follow suit and my dream is that spirit will sweep over here too so that we can become more confident about liberalisation and free speech."

"TO ME, MY VOICE DIDN'T SOUND MASCULINE. I TOTALLY BATTLED AGAINST HOW I SANG"

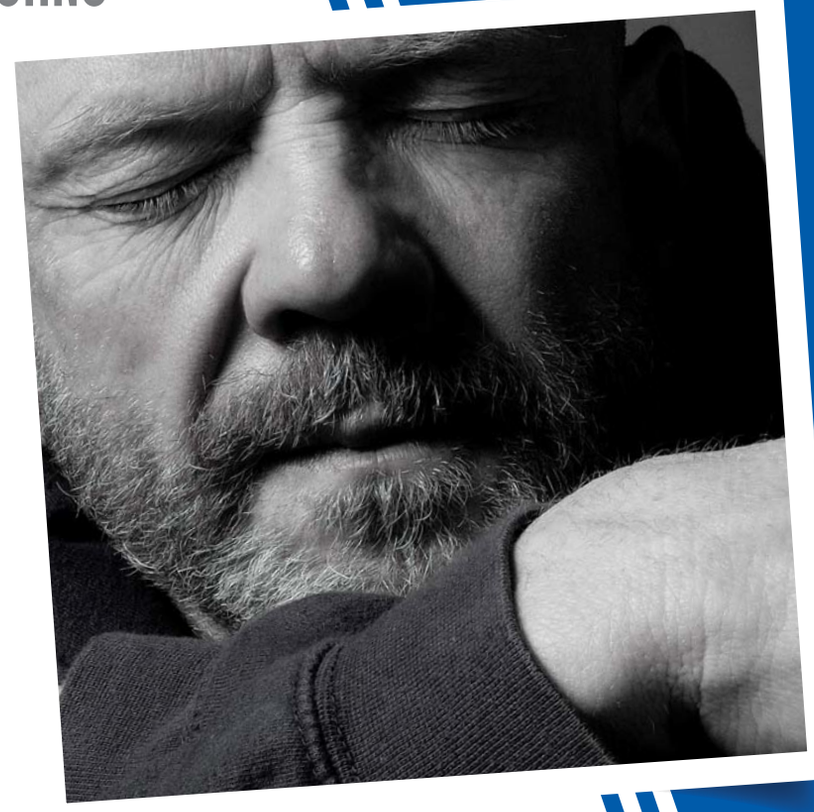
everyone on the morning of the video shoot for *I Feel Love*. What a total disregard for everyone else involved! I'd decided I was leaving, so that was all that mattered. I had a caring, socialist attitude, but I was also completely selfish. Bronski Beat and Communards could have lasted longer, but only if I'd never been in them."

That combustible attitude carried on in Communards, although Somerville and Richard Coles' detachment from their peers was more deliberate. "We were both very unpredictable," says Somerville. "Again, we used our platform well. We'd be in *Smash Hits* talking about AIDS, which was just nuts. It was a magazine full of bubbly colours, fun and escapism, and then Richard and I would pop up going (adopts ultra-earnest tone) 'Yeah, there's all these men in New York dying from this virus…' 'You what?!'

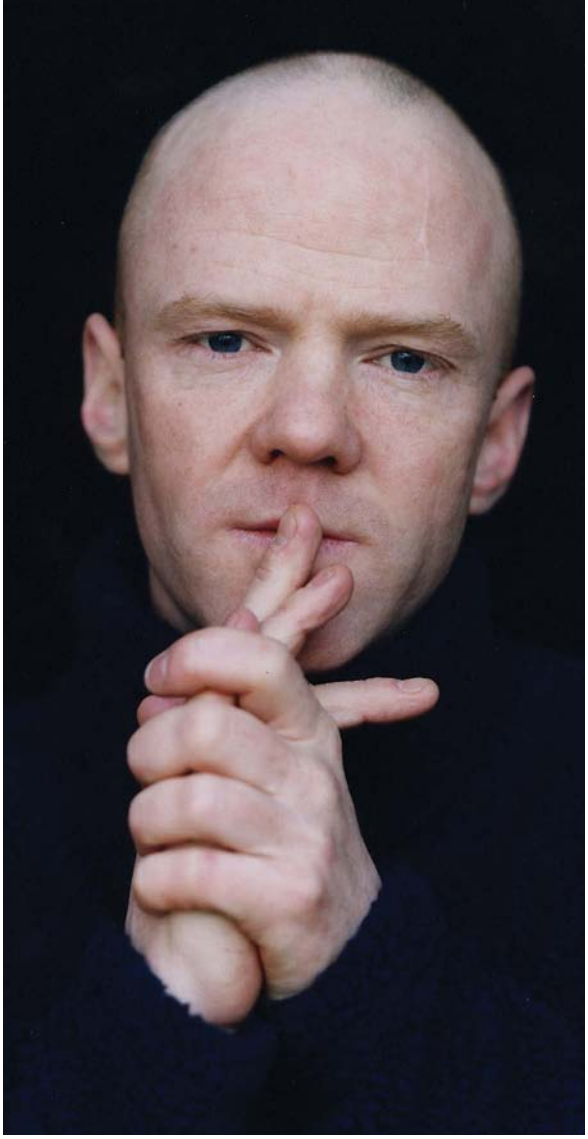
"I was so volatile anyway that a lot of people wouldn't come near me. They didn't know what I'd be like, but I didn't know what I'd be like either. I was too much for other people, and I was too much for myself. I was fired up by radicalism, but I thought it was my way or no way, and a lot of my indignation was very self-obsessed. I exhausted myself, never mind anyone else."

Somerville was openly contemptuous of the music industry, but the business seemed to get its own back by ensuring that his biggest hits were covers, whether The Jackson 5's *Never Can Say Goodbye* and Harold Melvin And The Bluenotes' *Don't Leave Me This Way* in Communards or Francoise Hardy's *Comment Te Dire Adieu* and Sylvester's *Mighty Real* as a solo star. "I felt overlooked as a songwriter among those covers," he says. "At the same time, I massively doubted myself as a writer all the time and wondered if I had talent."

There are no covers on *Homage*, as Somerville uses his newfound lust for life to joyful effect, writing and producing a string of celebratory disco anthems with longtime collaborator John Winfield. "I'm really privileged to be able to do this," he beams. "I know now that my voice is an emotional connection to myself. The real reason anybody wants to sing is self-expression.



Jimmy Somerville



Left - Jimmy Somerville in 2014 during the making of *Homage*: "I'm going to keep writing and singing until my lungs collapse. I'm generally in good nick… I still dance around the house – I'm always dancing in my head"

I've got so much freedom now to create, and I don't care how airy-fairy that sounds. Because I've got a new found positivity, it's affected how other people deal with me too. They feel confident enough to think 'This could actually work out with Jimmy now.'"

Not that the revitalised Somerville has softened his principles. The tongue-in-cheek *Freak* celebrates Somerville's ideal boyfriend, someone who "isn't into vanity". Is he ready to find that freak? "As the song says, I do need someone who doesn't want a ringside seat," he chuckles. "As I've become more open and assertive in who I am, that does extend to my sexuality – as flippant as the song is, there is a political side to *Freak*."

Would Somerville be interested in marriage? "Not marriage, but I'd have a civil partnership," he considers. "I'd encourage heterosexual people to start campaigning for a change in the rules so they could have civil partnerships too. For me, if you go into a marriage, it means the church has an authority within that marriage and therefore your everyday life. Even if you don't get married in church, it's about where marriage as an institution comes from historically."

Aware that he's sounding dogmatic, he pauses. "But that's just my opinion. I think civil partnerships are the future, but it's great that gay marriage is accepted now and that we can celebrate it. It's good that the press were largely supportive of Stephen Fry getting married, because that gives gay people power and takes that power away from those who think that two men or two women can't marry. If a man and woman have that freedom, then so should two men or two women. That's it. It's about humanity and being able to live your life within society."

Would such an outspoken pop star as Somerville be able to succeed if he was starting out now? "That's an interesting one, because there isn't anyone like it now," he ponders. "It's a very plastic and self-obsessed age in entertainment at the moment. The reality shows like *Made In Chelsea* are all about doubts in personal relationships and openly wondering 'Am I good enough for this person?', which isn't healthy.

"I don't know what I'd do if I was 17 now. I'd either be completely disillusioned and alienated by the society I found myself in, or be trapped by it. I hope I'd be looking around thinking 'You lot are f***ed!' and want to change things. So maybe music would still be the answer."

Rightly wanting *Homage* to reach as many people as possible, Somerville laughs that he's doing more publicity for this album than he's cared to do for the last 25 years. "People who make disco music now usually tap into the idea that it's throwaway," he says. "But the original disco was warm, emotional and, in the biggest context, about love. The production on Howard Melvin's *Wake Up Everybody* and The Philadelphia Allstars' *Clean Up The Ghetto* are stupendous, but you've got social comment in there too. Once John and I got into that spirit, it was a very quick album to make.

"On a lot of my old songs, I let someone else take control, particularly with the production. I'd think 'I don't really want this song to sound like that', but I never had the courage to do anything about it. I'd go along with it. This time, it's really where I'm at. This record is me."

It's all the better for it, especially on the beautiful finale *Learned To Talk*, which describes Somerville emerging from his dark times and is as moving as Communards' *For A Friend*. "It's about finding myself at rock bottom and making changes," he summarises. "It's very personal, but at the same time it's for anyone who feels vulnerable or lacks belief in themselves. I always used to go back into that darkness, but now I know how to stay in the light."

> "ON A LOT OF MY OLD SONGS, I LET SOMEONE ELSE TAKE CONTROL. I NEVER HAD THE COURAGE. THIS RECORD IS ME"

Somerville is so re-energised that he's already written and largely produced the album to follow *Homage*. "I'm going to keep writing and singing until my lungs collapse," he grins. "I didn't think I'd say that a few years ago. I'm generally in good nick, other than a disc in my back that keeps seizing up from cycling. I still dance around the house – I'm always dancing in my head.

"I'm no longer scared of the future, so the disco glitterball can keep swinging. Well, maybe it'll need an oiling every now and again."

With that, Jimmy Somerville gets ready to cycle back home. Fitter, happier, freakier and ready to keep dancing to the magical pulse of his new life.



Mike Prior



JIMMY ON... DISCO INFLUENCES

"I hope *Homage* shows a new audience that disco is more than dressing up in purple flares and a frizzy wig to dance to *Stayin' Alive*. I was never a fan of *Saturday Night Fever* as a kid… it was such a phenomenon and overpoweringly everywhere. I listened to less commercial disco like Cerrone and Fly Robin Fly, or stuff from the West Coast and Philadelphia. I'm lucky to have grown up in an era that was constant music on TV and radio. I'd go from Alex Harvey to Boney M in a moment. It was a never-ending aural banquet. Music kept me going and gave me a reason for living when I was in my teens.

"I really connected with that anarchic spirit when we recorded the backing vocals. I could see in these young women's faces – 'Oh my goodness, I'm not doing a little backing vocal here.' They're often up there in the mix just as much as me. So many old soul, disco and funk songs have rich, thick backing vocals. I tried to recapture that time when writers were finding these young vocalists to front their songs. It must have been so exciting for women, who weren't just seen as little singers anymore."



Photoshot



Photoshot

Getty Images

THE FACTORY FLOOR

MANCHESTER WAS PRIMED FOR AN ERA-DEFINING MECCA OF MUSIC BY THE TIME THE HAÇIENDA OPENED IN 1982. FOR THE NEXT 15 YEARS ITS PILLS-AND-THRILLS FUELLED HEDONISM SPAWNED A LEGACY THAT THRIVES TO THIS DAY... **MARK LINDORES**



The brainchild of music impresario and New Order manager Rob Gretton during one of New Order's first tours in 1981, the Haçienda was inspired by vibrant New York nightspots such as Danceteria, Funhouse, the Roxy and Paradise Garage – clubs which had proved to be a shot in the arm to New York's post-Studio 54 nocturnal wasteland, a state which Manchester had found itself in at the time.

While visiting those clubs, Gretton, along with Tony Wilson and New Order, experienced an epiphany that would transform Manchester in much the same way as it had Manhattan. Far from being the dubious dens of cocktails and hook-ups that passed as nightclubs in the UK, these vast, multi-level emporiums throbbed with the eclectic sounds of hip-hop, salsa, rock and electro, all mixed seamlessly together to create an unforgettable soundtrack to high times, the likes of which they had never experienced before.

Feeling inspired and enthused upon their return to Manchester, they ploughed Factory Records' profits from Joy Division into a disused yacht showroom and began the formation of the first club of its kind in Britain. Although advised that building a recording studio would be a more feasible plan of expansion of the Factory brand, they could not be dissuaded, feeling that a club was both a sound investment and a place where the Factory crowd could hang out. As there was nowhere in Manchester playing the music they liked, they felt in a position to create their own.

Assembling a team to help make their vision a reality, Gretton and Wilson enlisted Mike Pickering to book acts and DJs, while Factory sleeve artist Peter Saville recommended Ben Kelly to design the interior of the club.

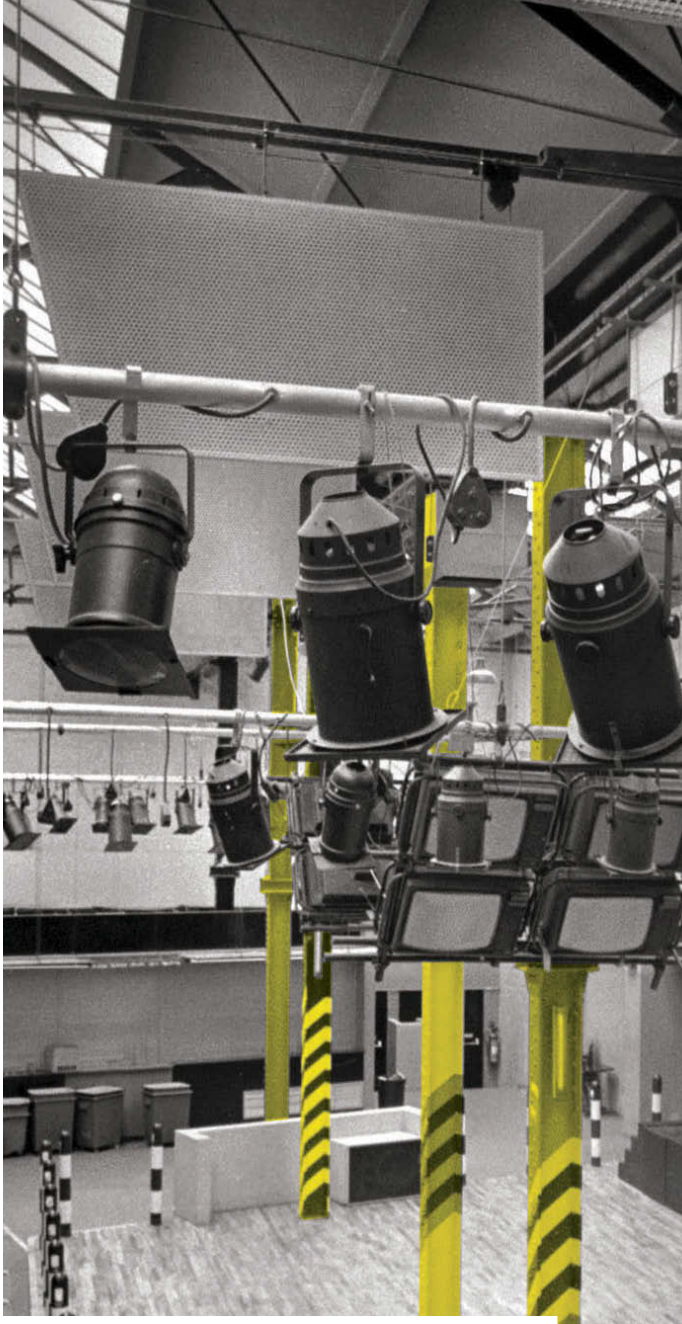
"It was a dream opportunity," recalls Ben, who used the minimalistic aesthetic of Factory and New Order artwork as his basis. "Simplicity was the key to what it would look like. I had this vast space and these wacky clients, and no-one really had any idea of what it was they wanted. It turned into this kind of monster orgy of self-expression. Because there were columns throughout the dancefloor which could be perceived as hazardous, it just occurred to me to mark them with stripes in the way that they would have been in a real-life factory, an industrial environment where hazards are marked with coded colours."

Capturing the essence of the clubs that inspired it, the Haçienda incorporated a café/restaurant, three bars and gallery space



Kevin Cummins / Getty Images

Above New Order's Peter Hook and Stephen Morris in the Haç, circa 1985



Right The interior of the club with its industrial pillars, pictured in June 1987

as well as the main stage/dancefloor area, firmly establishing itself as a creative hub for like-minded Mancs – although the mainstream crowd were hesitant in acknowledging its appeal.

"It was something different and the old school was opposed to any change, even though the old school existed in dingy clubs which had carpets that stuck to your feet," recalls Mike Pickering. "We were so ahead of our time – people were like, 'What is this?' There was nothing in the country like it."

Despite being open every night, the club was not the runaway success hindsight has afforded it. The first few years were very tough financially and it was little more than a stop-off for up-and-coming bands such as Culture Club, Simple Minds, Thompson Twins, OMD (who had recently released *Electricity* on Factory before signing with Virgin) and Eurythmics. A 'successful' show at the Haçienda meant a crowd of about 600. "We had a lot of names playing at the club before they made it big, but very few came back once they'd made it!" Mike laughs.

In the first two years of the club, only gigs by local heroes New Order and The Smiths sold out the 2000-capacity venue. The show by Morrissey and his cohorts – which took place immediately after the band had performed *This Charming Man* on *Top Of The Pops* – is regarded today as one of the greatest sets The Smiths ever played.

Another Haçienda performance that has gone down in music history is that by Madonna, who performed there for an outside broadcast for *The Tube*. A relative unknown at the time, her miming and gyrating along to *Holiday* for her first UK TV performance underwhelmed the crowd, who threw food and drinks at her. Rob Gretton's £50 offer for her to perform another set later that night at the club was impolitely declined, and she made a hasty exit.

Frustrated that the club seemed to be deviating from its initial Danceteria and Paradise Garage direction, a shake-up of the club's events and door policy began a huge turnaround in the Haçienda's fortunes. The introduction of Mike Pickering's Nude club night on Fridays was instrumental in defining what is now regarded as the pinnacle of the club.

"I started Nude in October 1984," Mike says. "It was the first of its type, because what I wanted was for my mates to get in. Everywhere in clubland in Britain at that time, if you were a complete thug and wore a shirt and tie then you got in and could cause trouble. But if you wore a nice Armani top and some nice trainers, then you couldn't get in – and that's what we all were. That's what New Order were, what Rob and I were, so we shook it up a bit. We made it free to people who were on the dole, and it was brilliant – it was the first place to accept those kinds of people. From that point we always got

POP_UP Such were the Haçienda's financial losses that Peter Hook's accountant once estimated that between 1982 and 1997, each punter that walked in through the door cost Factory £10

Photoshot



NEED TO KNOW:

The name Haçienda comes from a slogan of the radical group Situationist International; "The Haçienda Must Be Built", from *Formulary For A New Urbanism* by Ivan Chtcheglov.

The club carried on the tradition of giving all Factory releases catalogue numbers. The Haçienda's catalogue no. was FAC51.

The Haçienda included three cocktail bars. The downstairs bar was called 'The Gay Traitor,' after Anthony Blunt, a British art historian who spied for the Soviet Union. The two other bars, 'The Kim Philby' and 'Hicks' were named after Blunt's fellow spies.

The UK's first ecstasy-related death occurred at the club on 14th July 1989 when 16-year-old Clare Leighton collapsed and died after her boyfriend gave her an ecstasy tablet.

Despite its notoriety, the club was constantly at a financial loss. In 1985, New Order returned from their US tour to discover that the club was £2 million in debt; they paid it so that the club could continue. In his book *The Haçienda: How Not To Run A Club*, Peter Hook says that the later years of the club cost £18 million.

"PEOPLE WERE LIKE 'WHAT IS THIS?' THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT"

about 1200 people in on a Friday night. Saturdays were always busy, but that was a trendier crowd."

This shift away from flamboyance and elitism marked a big turning point in the types of people that went clubbing. They may not have been dressed in outlandish outfits and make-up, but the way they looked was just as important to them… just expressed differently. Rather than trying to outdo one another, the message was of unity and giving people a feeling of belonging. A strong tribal aspect was added by the adoption of such labels as Joe Bloggs, Naf Naf and Gio-Goi, all purchased from Manchester's fashion emporium, Affleck's Palace.

"This was really when the idea of fashion branding came to the fore," says DJ/writer Princess Julia. "Designer labels, tags, expensive sportswear became quite a uniform style for some. It may look like everyone was dressed down, but actually a lot of the fashion was very precise and thought out."

For many, Nude was the first introduction to the sounds of New York that had inspired the Haçienda in the first place. The burgeoning dance scene that would explode in the following years was bubbling under, and those that flocked to Nude were often to be found in Eastern Bloc records the following day, frantically trying to track down the records that they had danced to the previous night, often to no avail.

Getty Images

"GUNS WERE EVERYWHERE. THE POLICE DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW. VIOLENCE KILLED MANCHESTER AT THAT POINT"

Above Madonna performs *Burning Up* and *Holiday* for *The Tube*, January 1984

Below Alison Moyet with Yazoo at the Haçienda, 20th September 1982



Getty Images



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Having built up a rapport with DJs such as Mark Kamins, Derrick May, Arthur Baker and Frankie Knuckles, Mike was importing records directly from New York, Chicago and Detroit that gave his sets an exclusivity not seen since the Northern Soul days. As well as tip-offs about records, Mike was instrumental in booking the DJs to play sets at the Haçienda for huge fees and first-class treatment, pre-empting the superstar DJ phenomenon.

By 1987, the advent of rave culture and the introduction of ecstasy transformed the club scene beyond recognition, with DJs feted like rock stars and in demand all over the world. Meanwhile, in London, a triumvirate of club nights, Danny Rampling's Shoom, Paul Oakenfold's Spectrum and Nicky Holloway's The Trip, all inspired by a night in Ibiza's Amnesia club, became the Southern contingent of the Acid House movement.

Although the sounds had reverberated through the Haçienda's sparse steel interiors for a number of years, 1988-89 saw what was previously underground dance music cross over to the mainstream. Records such as Frankie Knuckles' *Your Love*, Steve Silk Hurley's *Jack Your Body*, Mr Fingers' *Can You Feel It* and Guru Josh's *Infinity* all became chart hits.

The biggest of all was Black Box's *Ride On Time* in 1989, which sold over 1 million copies and was the biggest-selling single of the year. Mike was given the track one Friday night and, recognising it as a future smash, set about releasing it, only to face opposition from Loleatta Holloway, whose track *Love Sensation* it sampled. "We had to re-record the vocals to get clearance on it," says Mike. "So we flew Heather Small out to Italy to record it, and it's Heather on *Ride On Time*. It's her vocal. If you listen there's certain giveaways, but no-one ever knew! We had to do it really quick so we could release it, because the original one had the sample on, and we replaced the sample with Heather! It's probably the biggest-ever Haçienda record. People think it's a big pop hit now, but it was massive."

By the beginning of the Nineties, Acid House was the subject of a major backlash with TV debate shows and newspapers hysterical about the "dangerous drug culture impacting the nation's youth". As so much rave culture was spontaneous and happened at impromptu times and places, it was hard to police. The Haçienda became the public face of the scene – and it bore the backlash.

Despite the negative effect of dance culture, the Haçienda's cultural significance was greater than ever due to the explosion of bands that had formed and evolved there. The success and notoriety of the club, inspired young bands to believe that they could indeed make something of themselves, and The Stone Roses, Happy Mondays, Inspiral Carpets, James, 808 State, The Charlatans, The Farm, The Mock Turtles, even Candy Flip all went on to achieve chart success and become part of what would be dubbed Madchester.

THE PLAYERS:

ROB GRETTON

Rob Gretton had been a prominent figure on the Manchester club scene, including a stint as a DJ at Rafters nightclub before managing Joy Division and New Order. He founded Factory Records and the Haçienda with Tony Wilson. Rob tragically died from a heart attack in 1999 at the age of 46.

TONY WILSON

One of Manchester's most renowned moguls, Tony Wilson was known as a TV presenter, journalist, radio broadcaster and an active supporter of the arts in Manchester, founding the annual In The City music conference with his partner Yvette Livesey. Tony was diagnosed with cancer in 2006. His course of treatment was the drug Sutent which was unavailable on the NHS in Manchester. Despite funds raised by acts helped by Tony including the Happy Mondays, he lost his battle in 2007.

MIKE PICKERING

Mike was DJ at the Haçienda for 11 years before achieving global success as the brains behind M People. Mike now works at the Columbia division of Sony where he is A&R for Calvin Harris, Kasabian, The Ting Tings and The Gossip, among others.

The Haçienda's fusion of sounds would also prove to be the catalyst for one of the most seminal records of the era. Creation label boss Alan McGee was in the grip of a chemically-enhanced euphoria when he had an "E-piphany" that swirling psychedelic guitars teamed with blissed-out beats would be the perfect direction for his fledgling band Primal Scream. The following day he put them in the studio with DJ Andrew Weatherall to work on their *Screamadelica* album.

Although the Haçienda had been responsible for some of Manchester's greatest highs, culturally and literally, the end was near. Rival gangs of drug dealers fought each other for prevalence, with many innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire. A series of muggings, robberies and stabbings caused irreparable damage to the club's reputation and this, together with mounting debts, was responsible for its temporary closure in 1992. It reopened months later and struggled on until 28th June 1997, but the party was over. "It was over for me when we shut down that first time," Mike says. "Manchester was in the grips of this tremendous lawlessness, and the police didn't want to do anything about it. There was millions of pounds spent each weekend on drugs, and it was highly likely that criminal elements would take that over – and that's what happened. Guns were everywhere. Violence killed Manchester at that point."

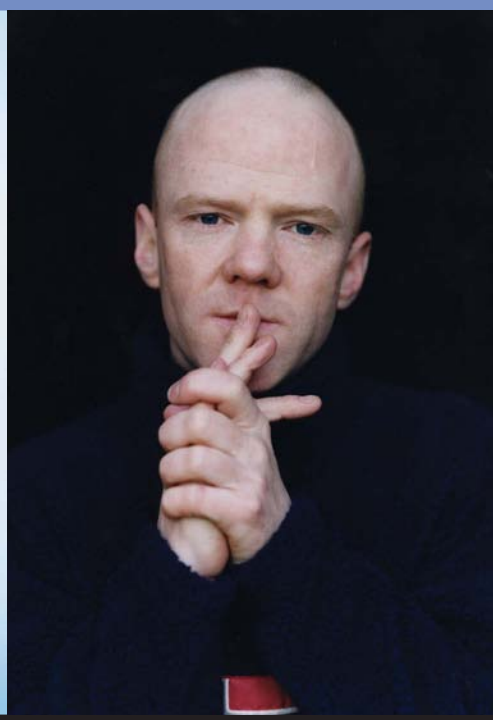
Today, the site of the Haçienda at Whitford St West is a luxury apartment complex. Though the original bricks and mortar are gone, the impact and legacy of what went before defines the city that Manchester is today.

POP_UP After the Haçienda closed, some mementos were taken, while others were auctioned off. One clubber allegedly bought a cubicle door as a souvenir of the night he had sex against it

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CLASSIC ALBUM

CRASH

THE HUMAN LEAGUE

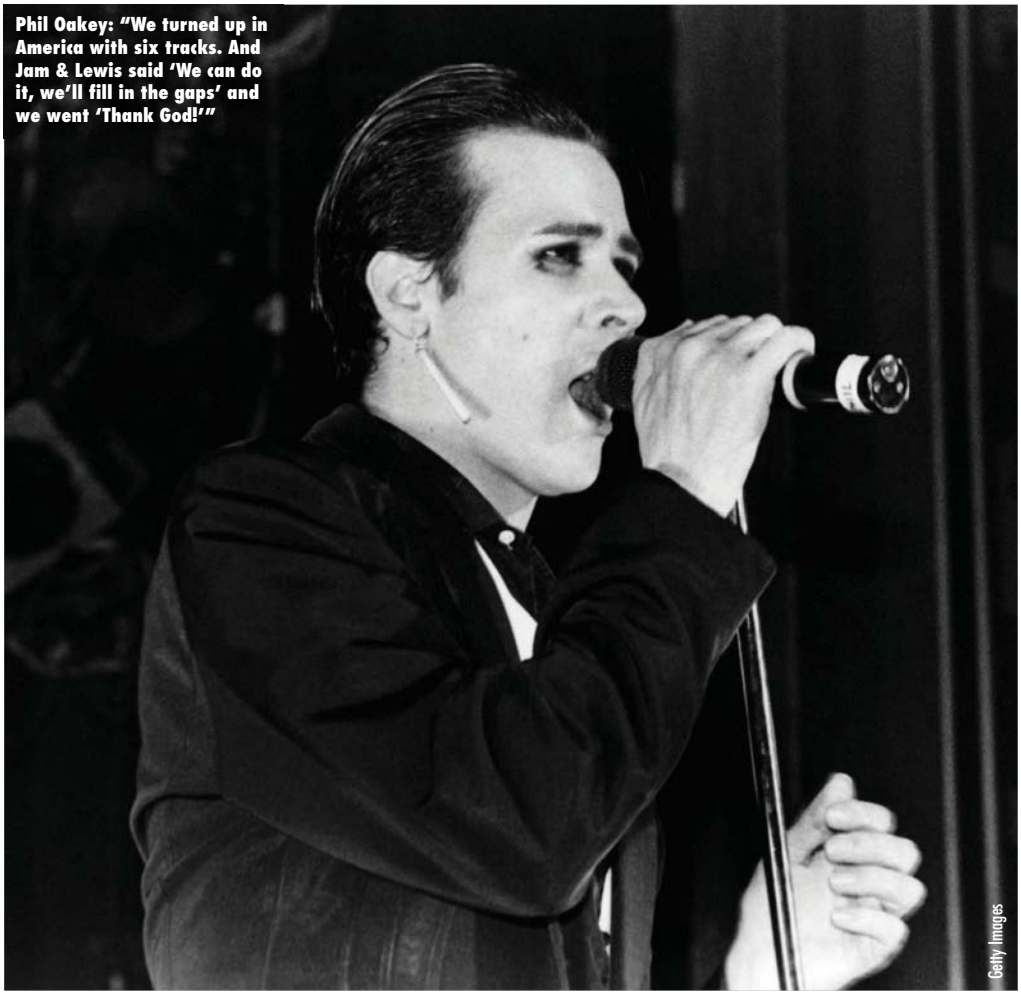
AN ALBUM THAT THE BAND OFTEN DISOWN, THAT LED TO TWO FOUNDER MEMBERS FLEEING IN HORROR, BUT WHICH ALSO SPAWNED A US NO. 1 SINGLE AND MARKED THE TRANSITION OF SYNTHPOP INTO THE MAINSTREAM. *CRASH* IS BOTH A LANDMARK AND AN ANOMALY. **IAN PEEL**



When we interviewed Phil Oakey late last year he wouldn't be drawn on *Crash*. To *Classic Pop*, it's a heady, one-off soundclash: Northern synthpop meets US cool, or – equally – the sound of US funkateers paying homage to the electro records that inspired them.

But not to Phil Oakey. "It's not a Human League album", he says. And that's the crux of it: to achieve this soundclash the group had to relinquish control of their music to Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Minneapolis' pioneering production duo. We loved the music that resulted… but it changed the League forever.

"Really, *Crash* isn't really a Human League album," Phil explains. "It is a Human League album but we occasionally went off on diversions. We weren't particularly souly, although strangely our bassist was into soul and reggae. Two of our best songwriters, one of them



Phil Oakey: "We turned up in America with six tracks. And Jam & Lewis said 'We can do it, we'll fill in the gaps' and we went 'Thank God!'"

Getty Images

TRACK BY TRACK

1 MONEY

"You can have my money! I don't need it anymore!" It's the height of the 'me generation' and the Human League are in full, chrome-plated funk force, but giving it all away. What, exactly, was going on in Minneapolis? Instantly you know this is a new-era League album, but everything you knew – or thought you knew – until this point is about to turn on its axis. The song was written by Oakey and Burden, plus Jim Russell, who also remixed the 12" Extended Version of *Hysteria's Life On Your Own and* appeared on Bob Geldof's 2011 album *How To Compose Popular Songs That Will Sell.*

2 SWANG

Swang is a ruthless, locked groove, the sort of thing Flyte Tyme would have delivered perfectly live. On record, Jam & Lewis channel late-Seventies, *Being Boiled*-era Human League via the angular basslines and rhythms of Minneapolis funk. Sound clash, as opposed to crash, it was written by Flyte Tyme saxophonist David Eiland (who pops up on other Jam & Lewis hits like Janet Jackson's *Black Cat* and the title track of Herb Alpert's album *Keep Your Eye On Me*).

3 HUMAN

On *Crash*'s release, critics were quick to point out the similarities between this track and much of Jam & Lewis' work with the S.O.S. Band. Jam disagreed: "I don't think it is at all," he told *Billboard*. "Mary Davis' voice wouldn't sound the same, and the Roland 808 we used [on S.O.S. Band productions] isn't there at all. We try consciously to do and not do things on certain people to keep everybody's sound separate."

4 JAM

A strange brew – a Phil Oakey/Jim Russell composition which, in the hands of Jam & Lewis, would have been perfect for *Soul Train* and US radio but – at the same time – is not a million miles away from early Pet Shop Boys. There's no politics here: "If all our life is dancing," Phil declares, "then let's just let the music play." Proof positive that, at the very least, *Crash* was a massive learning curve for both the group and its audience. They had to crash, you could say, to survive.

5 ARE YOU EVER COMING BACK?

Side One of the original vinyl edition ends with a real highlight of the set. *Are You Ever Coming Back?* – another Oakey/Burden/Russell co-write – is the album's first downtempo moment, pulling in Euro and synthpop themes, and clearly harking back to the group's last big bit before decamping to America, *Louise.*

6 I NEED YOUR LOVING

A single which causes dismay among fans. It followed the US No. 1 and UK No. 8 positions of *Human* by failing to register in the UK and reaching No. 44 in the USA. According to The Black Hit of Space, it's "probably the worst Human League single ever released". They put this to the group's then-manager Richard Hermitage in 2010; remaining very, very tight-lipped about his work with the band, Hermitage did reveal that "The band wanted *I Need Your Loving* against all advice," conceding "but I still think Radio One should have supported the record. *Love On The Run* should have been released instead."

7 PARTY

Jam & Lewis get back into funk mode for a track that, without Phil Oakey, could be any random Eighties Minneapolis dance track – but the vocal and the doom-laden pre-chorus just about keeps everything on course. Is he singing about a subversive Crazy Daisy exchange visit to underground American party-land, or some sort of new romantic Sheffield political party? That is the question.

8 LOVE ON THE RUN

An incessant snare-drum-and-brass backing (like a disco version of Howard Jones' *Pearl In The Shell*) holds forth until after the last chorus when the whole thing kicks off and becomes what everyone in the studio knew could have been a massive crowd-pleaser, either as a live track or as a single. In fact it could have been – as Richard Hermitage mentions above – the follow-up to *Human.*

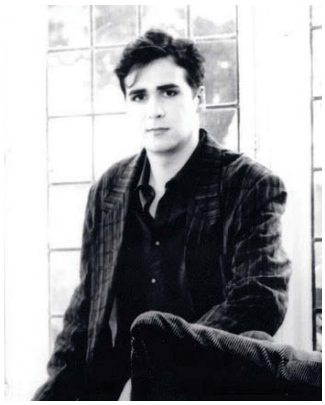
9 THE REAL THING

Lyrically, could this – written by Oakey, Burden and Russell with Stephen Fellows of fellow Sheffield luminaries The Comsat Angels – be a follow-up to *Don't You Want Me?* The object of Phil's affection is no longer working in a cocktail bar, she's day-dreaming in a late-Eighties office-plex. It's only been weeks, but it could have been a lifetime. "She is waiting, in the office, for the bell to go," he intones, "she is thinking, of their meeting, just a month ago..."

10 LOVE IS ALL THAT MATTERS

Alfred Soto, writing for *Stylus* magazine in 2006, said it best. "*Love Is All That Matters* is a clever sequel to *Dare*'s *Love Action,* on which Oakey, at his most charmingly pompous, willed himself to believe in love. Thanks to the assured thud-thud of the drum program and Sulley's duet with a synth playing a rollercoaster melody line (seek ye the 12" single), *Love Is All That Matters* shows how a strong work ethic can create an estimable simulation of romantic bliss."

THE PLAYERS



PHILIP OAKEY

"I'm listening to a lot of Minneapolis stuff again, for some reason," Phil tells *Classic Pop*. "I'm enjoying that balance of sound." In 1986, he knew that the Human League, seeking a new direction, and Jam & Lewis, on the cusp of worldwide acclaim but looking to cross over from urban to mainstream, met at exactly the right time in their careers. "Maybe if they'd been huge they'd have been 'Hey, what do we want these Limeys here for?'" Phil reckons. "Though I'm saying that as if they're nasty guys, and they're the opposite – they're total gentlemen, committed to getting everything right."



JOANNE CATHERALL

Crash took Joanne's image, input and vocals to a vast US audience – but not without sacrifice, as Jam & Lewis replaced some of her singing with session singers. "They knew what they were doing," she said in 2011. "They said, 'You're working so hard, go to LA, have a break at the Hiatt on Sunset'. When we came back they'd put this [other] woman all over the place and I sort of lost it with them." But hindsight, she says, proved them wrong. "We know this is what people like about us. If they want Mariah Carey, they're going to buy her album. If they want someone quirky and not like anyone else, they can buy Human League records."



SUSAN ANN SULLEY

Susanne – and her vocals – were very much at the beck and call of Jam & Lewis during the making of *Crash*. "We spent three months on vocals," she remembers. "Some days you'd go in and Jimmy Jam would say, 'No, it's not feeling right, go back to the hotel.' Or, 'Ooh, it's sunny, let's go and have a barbecue.'" But she also had to fight to get her and Joanne's vocals on the record. "They didn't get that we didn't want other singers," she said in 2011. "'We just put her on to bring it all together,' [they'd say]. 'Well, we don't want her on, take her off,' [we'd say]. 'But it won't sound as good...' 'We don't care, it's got to be us or it's sort of cheating!'"



IAN BURDEN

By *Crash*, Burden was "clinging to unrealistic loyalty", he told Niels Kolling of The Black Hit of Space (the de facto website for all things League) in 2009. "As one-fourth of the remaining partnership I found myself consistently out-voted by Susan, Joanne and Philip," he recalled. "The more I disagreed with decisions, the more I was bypassed. My voice was no longer a part of the crowd. They went to Lanzarote whilst I went to the Seychelles, and on returning it was obvious that they had mapped out a whole load of stuff without any interest in my opinions. They just stared me down and talked over the top of me."



PHILIP ADRIAN WRIGHT

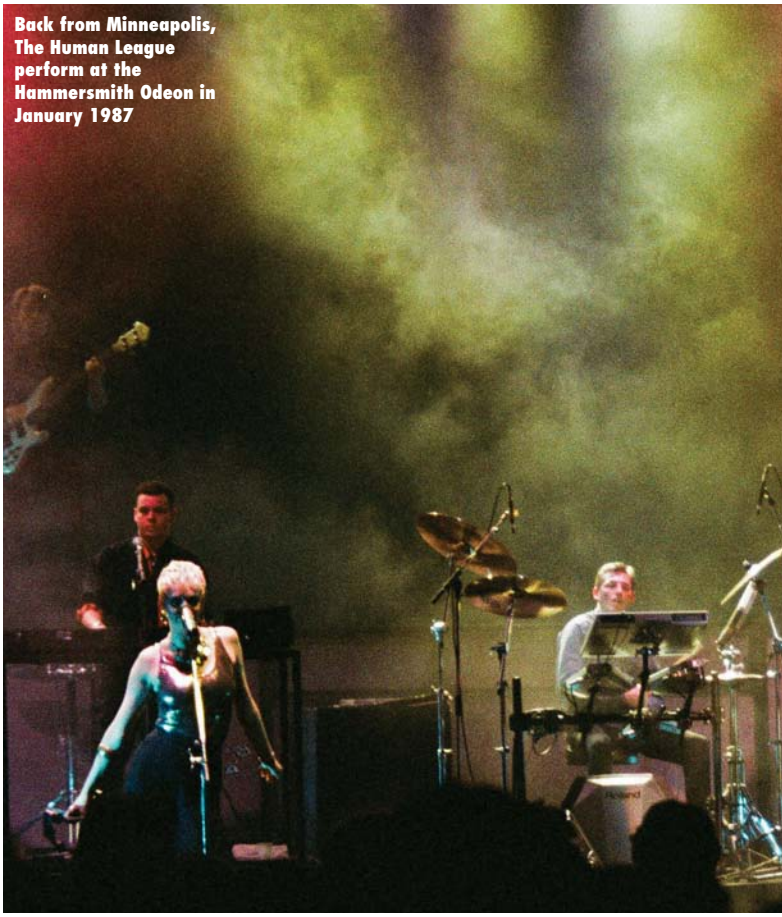
"Adrian Wright's taken a walk, it seems," the *Melody Maker* said in 1986. "An original member, the one who messed with the slides and gave the original League their wacky sci-fi overtones, has gone missing." He went into *Crash* as projectionist-turned-keyboardist and co-songwriter, but by the time the group returned to the UK, he – legend has it – felt so side-lined by Jam & Lewis' production coup d'etat that he quit the business for good. "Adrian didn't really have a part in the group anymore," Jo told *Only Music*. "His biggest part was the slides... and he decided it wasn't right for the music we were doing."

PAUL RABIGER

Keyboard player, credited with much of the arrangements and programming behind *Crash*. Later, he played a similar role for ABC on *Skyscraping* (most notably on *Ask A Thousand Times*) and his work on Coldcut's ambient classic *Autumn Leaves* means he pops up regularly on chillout compilations.

FLYTE TYME

Starting off as a Minneapolis R&B band, Flyte Tyme soon became the moniker of keyboard player Jimmy 'Jam' Harris and bassist Terry Lewis' off-shoot production unit, which has produced nine US No. 1's for Janet Jackson and No. 1 hits for George Michael, Mariah Carey and Usher. Although the Human League are quick to say how the duo sidelined them in the writing and recording of *Crash*, Susan Ann Sulley says their overall impact was positive. "We began recording *Crash* in London, but it wasn't working," she said in 2012. "There were factions within the group. Jam and Lewis saved the day... they taught us a lot, especially in teaching you how to go about things. It was not so bad.'



Back from Minneapolis, The Human League perform at the Hammersmith Odeon in January 1987

was a reggae bassist and Jo Callis loved soul, he knows everything about it, and we were doing it on synth. But we were listening to Yankee soul and to Jam & Lewis. We thought they were using synthesisers in a sort of parallel way to us. You know the Marvin Gaye *Midnight Love* album? That's massively synthetic. The soul guys were really pushing somewhere new with their stuff..."

Jam & Lewis were on the crest of a wave. They'd spent five years delivering dance hits, from the first album by Time in 1981 to the S.O.S. Band, Cherelle and Alexander O'Neal. By the time of *Crash* they'd just scored their first US No. 1 with Janet Jackson's *When I Think Of You*; *Crash*'s first single, *Human*, became their second and, in the same year, Robert Palmer charted with the first cover version of a Jam & Lewis track with his take on Cherelle's *I Didn't Mean To Turn You On*.

The first thing they did was finish writing the album. Phil, for one, was grateful. "We turned up in America with six tracks trying to make an album," he said. "And Jam & Lewis said 'It's all right, we can do it, we'll fill in the gaps' and we went 'Thank God!'"

This meant that, for the first time, they would relinquish control over their sound and their songs to a production team. Ironically, at the exact same time, Janet Jackson was doing the same thing – moving on from the Cliff Richard duets of *Dream Street* and handing control to Jam & Lewis. Conversely, though, she took ownership of the fact that the change in musical direction, if not her actual music, was her decision. She called her album *Control* and was celebrated for it.

Crash is in many ways the companion piece to *Control*. 'Control Freaks' would have been a better title. "Classically I was the control freak on the two albums before, *Dare* and *Hysteria*," Phil concedes. "Martin Rushent famously was annoyed that I wouldn't let any recording be done when I wasn't in the room. I'd been a bit over-strong on that. You can't do that with Jam & Lewis. They're the most talented musicians that we've


Getty Images

been in a room with. Jimmy Jam… while you're turning round, he's written *Human*."

Unlike Janet, though, the League were a combination of personalities and – by this stage – personal politics. "So we let Jam & Lewis take over," Phil explains. "We had a terrible problem within the group. A lot of us felt entitled: we thought that anything we wrote should go on an album. From being a bunch of bozos who wanted to be in a group, suddenly we were business people who knew that the money came from publishing. Before, everyone had cooperated… the vision we had of becoming world-beaters with our old mates had fallen apart. That time when people who you thought would be mates for the rest of your life have gone because you argued over money."

While the group were struggling to let Jam & Lewis steer the album, it has been overlooked that the producers, too, were moving out of their comfort zone: both musically and – again – in terms of control. As *Billboard* noted at the time, the album was "in many respects a departure for the Flyte Tyme team. For the first time, material and basic arrangements were, for the most part, assembled before Jam & Lewis got involved in the project. Paul Rabiger, an associate of Human League, is credited with coming up with many of the basic arrangements." And this was also the first time they'd worked a pop – as opposed to dance – project.

> "I was the control freak on the two albums before, *Dare* and *Hysteria*, but you can't do that with Jam & Lewis. They're the most talented musicians that we've been in a room with" **PHIL OAKEY**

THE BIG PICTURE

THE VIDEOS

HUMAN

DIRECTOR: ANDY MORAHAN

"We're all water", Yoko Ono once sang; when the Human League sang "I'm only Human," Andy Morahan merged the two and placed Phil, Susan and Jo under water and waterfalls, fading from one to the other. Yet the killer performance is all in Oakey's facial expressions, by turns defiant and crushingly defeated. Morahan shot Band Aid 30's *Do They Know It's Christmas?* and is putting together his first movie, *Boogie Man*, the story of a British Indian teen obsessed with *Saturday Night Fever*.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1ysoohV_zA



I NEED YOUR LOVING

DIRECTOR: ANDY MORAHAN

Be very careful before you type this link in, for what you see can never be erased from your mind! It's not all bad, it just that – in hindsight – *I Need Your Loving* deconstructed the sophistication of *Human* rather than built upon it. So the group are back as they were for *The Lebanon*, in a pseudo-concert setting, presiding over – or rather miming over – an industrial Jam & Lewis backing that's immediately reminiscent of Janet Jackson's *What Have You Done For Me Lately?*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1N4X3VMUHI



LOVE IS ALL THAT MATTERS

DIRECTOR: VARIOUS/MONTAGE

It's still frustrating that a proper League-style performance video was never made for this classic single, but though the League had soundtracked electronica from the late Seventies rise of the machines to the late Eighties acid house explosion, in 1987 the entire music world was turning on its heels. So: pause and take stock with a Best Of, use the last track from *Crash* as a lead single, and create this montage video of their story to date… which is also possibly to blame for 2015's trend of the 'lyric video'.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jBwWP0YMws



PRIVATE EYES

MUSIC BOX ITV, NOVEMBER 1986

There's a quite enthralling *Crash*-era interview with Phil Oakey and Paula Yates on The (You) Tube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-an7BUsQYWo), where Phil talks about hiring Jam & Lewis on account of their work on Change's *Change Of Heart* album. But the best upload from this era is this 45-minute *Music Box* special, filmed at Phil and Jo's Sheffield home where, they, Susanne and Ian talk at length about the making of the album. It's well worth watching, even if just for Phil's summary of this period in League history.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92n_0lVSxPo



The end result? "*Crash* is not quite a Human League album," says Phil. "It's our Minneapolis soul album, and Jimmy and Terry did it, we let them do it, and we were happy." But other UK groups were having their Minneapolis moment at the same time – not least ABC, who, bowled over by what they were hearing from Prince and his cohorts, recorded the sublime near-instrumental track *Minneapolis* as the B-side to *When Smokey Sings*. "They'd approached Jimmy and Terry before us," Phil says, "but Jimmy and Terry said their stuff was so developed that they couldn't add anything. They were bombarded at that stage, getting approaches from everyone. We got in there two months before Janet Jackson. When we went to visit to make sure we could work with them, they were mixing *What Have You Done For Me Lately?* which was fantastic."

Having something less developed, less thought out than what studio perfectionists ABC might have come up with was appealing to Jam & Lewis. "The original arrangements were good but the sequencers gave them a stiff feel," Jimmy Jam said at the time. "We recut them naturally." Meaning – as *Billboard* explained – "that the electronics were played by hand, not synchronised to the keyboards and drum machines used in the production." And how did Jam sum up the end result? "It was a total about face for The Human League."

Bassist/keyboardist Ian Burden felt sidelined. "Me and Adrian [Philip Adrian Wright] played a lot of table-tennis (during the *Crash* sessions)," he later recalled. "Jimmy Jam played all the keyboard parts I'd written, although they allowed me to sing a few parts. They focused on the songs they'd written themselves and on another, written by one of their pals. Minneapolis was sub-zero temperatures, and I wished we were back in Berkshire making a Human League album with Martin (*Dare* producer Martin Rushent)…"



"I know we pulled through [on *Crash*]' Oakey said in 1986. "Now I know there'll be 10 Human League albums, that we're here to stay"

"We didn't think *Human* was instant. We knew we had a solid song, but it was more a pop cut, so we're proud of how well it's done on a dance level and on black radio" **JIMMY JAM**

Both Ian and Adrian Wright departed the group quickly after the recording process, but when the music was released, record buyers – oblivious to all this internal turmoil – flocked to it.

Alfred Soto, writing for *Stylus* magazine's 'Second Thoughts' column in 2006, sees lead single *Human* as the successor – or antidote – to the League's other big anthem. "Susanne Sulley enters, in a brilliant spoken-word turn that eclipses her work on *Don't You Want Me*, in which she humanised the complaints of Oakey's whiny cad. Here she flings Oakey's macho bullshit back at him by first admitting to the same trespasses ("When we were apart, I was human too"– understated perfection), then by mocking his excuses in a genderfuck ("I am just a man!") of wounded empathy."

"We just do what we like," Jam told *Billboard* when *Human* hit No. 1 in 1986, "and right now popular taste is running parallel. If the public's taste was to turn 180 degrees, we'd have no hits… We didn't think *Human* was instant. We thought we had a solid song, but it was more a pop cut, so we're proud of how well it's done on a dance level and at black radio."

As *Musician* magazine summed up in their album review in 1986, *Crash* succeeds on account of "the richer musical textures, in the hooks which are tastier, and in historical savvy… *Crash* makes so much sense because it unscrambles the roots of contemporary Britpop in 1970s American black pop."

Crash is a celebration of collision, but it didn't work for everyone. Alfred Soto: "It sounds like an ideal union: Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis' rhythmic spritz and Philip Oakey's affectlessness. The result is a mismatch so complete that a judge in divorce court might have shed a few tears."

For Phil, the success of the record was in more than just sales. It proved the Human League weren't just a so-called synthpop novelty group, and that he was – for a self-confessed non-musician – a damn fine singer. "*Crash* was great because I always suspected that we were a novelty act. The material before did well because it was unique. If you wanted to hear Human League-type stuff you had to buy the Human League, whereas with Jam & Lewis, we had a No. 1. I didn't write it, but I didn't spoil it. I'd always assumed that I was a pretty poor singer, really, and somehow they made my singing good enough to be popular, without the novelty songs."

LISTEN UP!

Hear *Crash* – and the masterful work of Jam & Lewis – via our Classic Pop Spotify playlist here:

http://www.classicpopmag.com/category/playlists/

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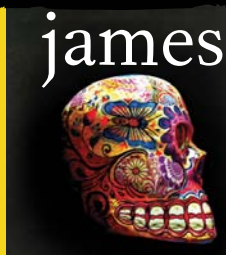
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BLANCMANGE "SEMI DETACHED" (CDBRED650/CDXBRED650/BRED650)

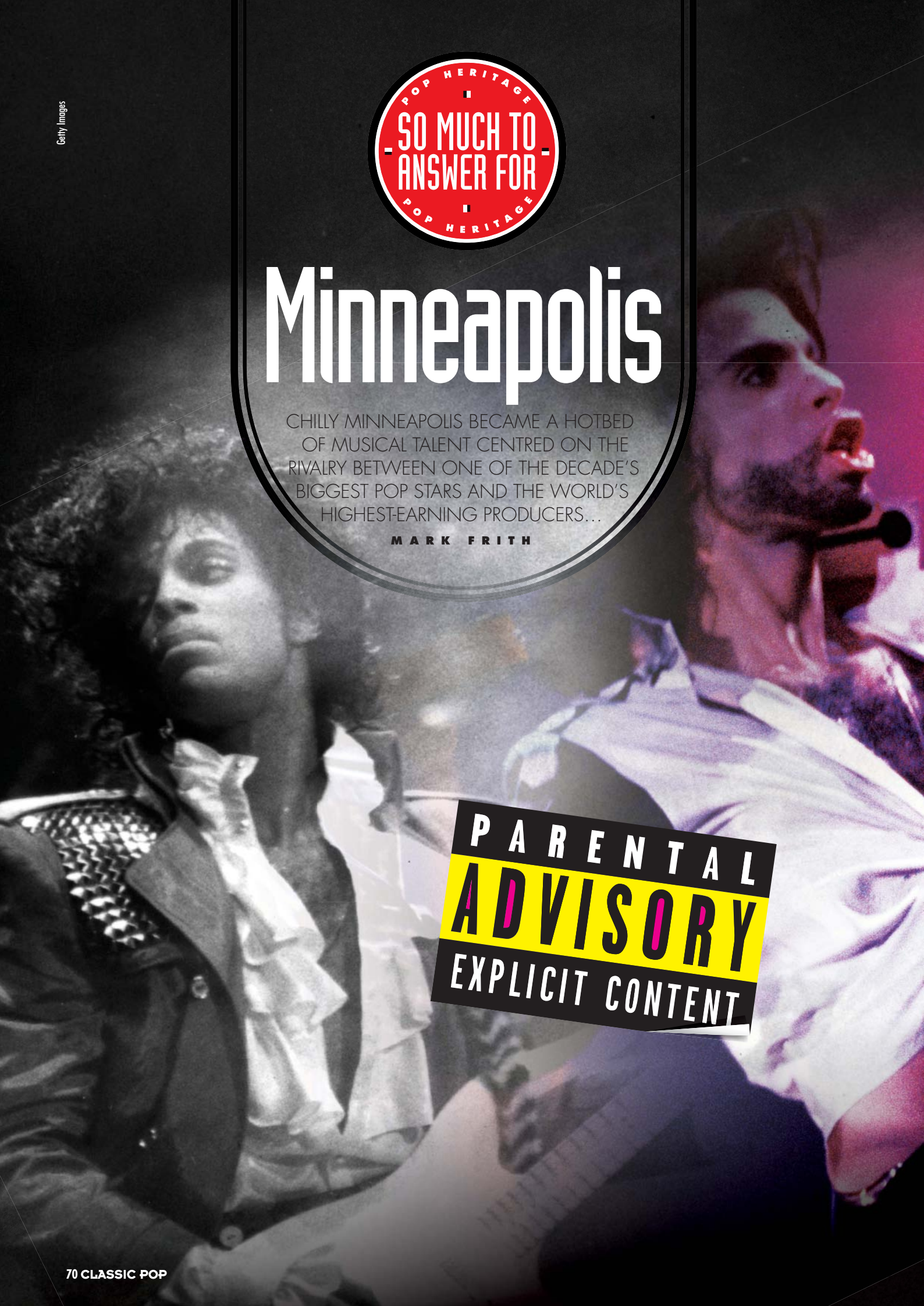
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POP HERITAGE

SO MUCH TO ANSWER FOR

POP HERITAGE

Minneapolis

CHILLY MINNEAPOLIS BECAME A HOTBED OF MUSICAL TALENT CENTRED ON THE RIVALRY BETWEEN ONE OF THE DECADE'S BIGGEST POP STARS AND THE WORLD'S HIGHEST-EARNING PRODUCERS...

MARK FRITH

PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

Minneapolis ain't huge. In fact, in terms of numbers it barely scrapes into the Top 50 US cities, with just over 400,000 residents. But when one of those residents was – and, mostly, still is – Prince, none of that matters, because Minneapolis will always be known as Prince's town. It's Prince that earns the city its place in the list of legendary US music cities, but this isn't just his story – this is also the story of the two musicians-turned-producers who broke away from his shadow to create history of their own.

Born Prince Rogers Nelson in the scorching hot summer of 1958, Prince's mum Mattie and dad John were both singers. Although never as hands-on as Michael and Janet Jackson's father (more of him later), John particularly encouraged Prince and daughter Tika in their musical endeavours (legend has it that Prince was writing songs on his dad's piano at the age of seven), but a happy childhood was to be torn asunder when Prince's parents separated when Prince was 10 and his sister eight.

The spilt was to lead to a deeply unhappy period for the pair, with the older Prince bearing the brunt. A highly fractious relationship with his mother's new husband led to him moving back in with his father who, in time, threw him out after finding his newly-teenage son in bed with a girl (starting as he meant to go on, clearly). This latest shift in living arrangements would prove to be one of the most important in the young boy's life as this ejection led to him moving in with the neighbours, a family called the Andersons, and a deep friendship and musical kinship formed with the family's son, Andre. This was to be the first of Prince's many collaborations; the pair shared a living space, went to school together, and also formed a band that played at parties in the local area. Prince was already highly proficient at piano, guitar and loved singing, too. He'd found his vocation – and he still wasn't even 16.

Prince spent the next year or two writing, but as he turned 17 he became impatient and began to tell those closest to him that it was time to get serious. After securing a management deal with Owen Husney, a Minneapolis businessman, Prince made a demo and bagged a deal with a lovestruck Warner Brothers – not just any deal, but one that gave Prince full creative control and ownership of publishing rights. He was just 18.

With an efficiency that would become his trademark, Prince released his first album, *For You*, in April 1978. His prodigious talent was there to see on the album's sleevenotes, which noted that Prince had played all 27 instruments on the album. One tour and 18 months later there was a second album – *Prince* – which reached the Billboard Top 30 album chart and a big hit single in *I Wanna Be Your Lover*, which would go on to sell a million copies. The following year there was a third album – *Dirty Mind* – and the year after that a fourth, *Controversy*. Each grew in profile and sales, and a series of TV appearances and even a support slot with The Rolling Stones saw him gain a reputation for great songs, filthy lyrics and exhausting live performances.



Morris Day and Jesse Johnson of The Time on stage in Chicago, April 1983

Getty Images

While his albums all grew in profile and sales, Prince gained a reputation for great songs, filthy lyrics and exhausting live performances



That was just to be the beginning, though, as 1981 saw Prince embark on two huge projects. One was a new album – a double – called *1999*, that would eventually be released in late 1982 and has to date sold three million copies. It also produced two career-defining hits in *1999* (a minor hit here in early 1983, a far bigger hit in 1985 and, of course, 1999) and *Little Red Corvette*, a huge *MTV* favourite and Prince's first US Top 10 hit.

The other project was a new band, an offshoot act who Prince would produce and perform virtually all the music for, while a Prince-lookalike (the also-diminutive Morris Day) took on lead vocals. They were called The Time, and Prince wanted them to carry on his trademark sound (funky, danceable, chart-friendly) whilst he went off in a different direction.

Although they had neither a Top 40 single nor album in the UK, The Time were big news in the States. Two members, bassist Terry Lewis and keyboardist Jimmy Jam, also gradually became producers of note, but one particular recording session with The S.O.S. Band in Atlanta was to lead to their departure from the band. A snowstorm stranded them in Georgia when they should have been playing a gig in San Antonio, Texas (leading to Prince playing Lewis's bass parts off-stage whilst another member, Jerome Benton, mimed them on stage). Prince

SO MUCH TO ANSWER FOR

Minneapolis

BAND
ARTIST

BAND MEMBER
WORKED WITH
SIBLING
ROMANTICALLY ATTACHED
PRODUCED
COLLABORATED
NEARLY JOINED
WROTE SONG FOR
CLASSIC TRACK



THE HUMAN LEAGUE

GEORGE MICHAEL

JANET JACKSON

MICHAEL JACKSON

CHERELLE

MARIAH CAREY

JAM & LEWIS

ALEXANDER O'NEAL

BOYZ II MEN

JEROME BENTON

MORRIS DAY

THE TIME



JELLYBEAN JOHNSON

MONTE MOIR

MATT FINK

VANITY 6/ APOLLONIA 6

PRINCE



MARTINA

SINEAD O'CONNOR

THE BANGLES



SHEENA EASTON

BOBBY Z

MADONNA



SHEILA E

DEZ DICKERSON

THE REVOLUTION



WENDY MELVOIN

SUSANNAH MELVOIN

LISA COLEMAN

GAYLE CHAPMAN

ANDRÉ CYMONE

WENDY & LISA

SMASHING PUMPKINS

JONATHAN MELVOIN



"I gotta write something for that girl" - Prince penned the Grammy-winning *Sugar Walls* for Sheena Easton

Getty Images

dismissed them from the band, but the recording session was to become famous for more reasons than one, for one of the songs recorded whilst the pair were snowed in was *Just Be Good To Me* – a worldwide hit and disco anthem and the making of the duo as producers of note.

The reasons behind the departure always rankled with Prince, but he had another new band project in which to invest his considerable energy. The Revolution were first credited on the album *1999* and would become his touring band for several years. But when you tour with Prince, the demands are huge… and unusual.

By this stage Prince had already built up a repertoire of filthy songs, particularly those taken from *Dirty Mind*. One song, *Head* – about a sexual encounter between Prince and a soon-to-be-married young woman – required band member Gayle Chapman to simulate oral sex each night on tour. A devout Christian, Chapman soon baled, to be replaced by Lisa Coleman. A second band member left, for religious reasons, and Dez Dickerson's replacement was Coleman's lifelong friend Wendy Melvoin, a tall, striking guitarist who became a key part of the visual look of Prince's band and also had a sister, Susannah, who was to be Prince's girlfriend through much of his mid-Eighties 'imperial' phase.

And what a phase: the soundtrack to his 1984 film *Purple Rain* spent 24 consecutive weeks at No. 1, the album sold 13 million copies, and the film of the same name won an Oscar. And, at last, some British hits – his first chart album with *Purple Rain* and a big Top 10 hit with *When Doves Cry* (a deeply personal track, detailing much of the parental conflict so prevalent in his early life).

At the following year's Brit Awards Prince won two awards, and the combination of a pink feather boa, a mumbled speech and – brilliantly – a huge minder accompanying him to the stage to collect both gongs, turned him overnight into the most talked-about pop star in the UK.

Less controversial than the Sheena Easton song Sugar Walls was the song Prince wrote for The Bangles, Manic Monday, another worldwide hit



To the British papers, post-Brits, he became a kind of pantomime villain – that odd guy, the mini-Hendrix, with paranoia issues (what, he needed a *minder*? What were they going to *do* to him? Pluck out his feathers on the way to the stage?). To the American media, who hadn't yet experienced such a dramatic display of his eccentricity, Prince was the big-selling sensation with the pervy lyrics. With right-wing sentiment on the rise, his fame also put him in the firing line. Prominent US Senator Al Gore's wife Tipper was so disgusted to hear her 11 year old daughter Karenna listening to the track *Darling Nikki* from the *Purple Rain* soundtrack (sample lyric: "I met her in a hotel lobby/Masturbating with a magazine") she decided to do something about it. Together with Susan Baker, then wife of US Treasury Secretary James Baker, she founded the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) which campaigned for stickers on record sleeves, advising parents of unsuitable content for children. The PMRC also published its Filthy Fifteen, the records they most wanted banned, and *Darling Nikki* sat proudly at the top of the list. And as for number two on that chart…

The story of how Sheena Easton came to work with Prince starts off innocently enough, as Easton explained in a recent interview. "I was in the studio with one of Prince's producers and he suddenly said 'Prince sent over a track for you. We saw you on *The Tonight Show* and Prince said "I gotta write something for that girl."' And so he sent over *Sugar Walls* and it was one of those things where it was like, 'Here it is. If you want to do it, here's my number.'"


Janet Jackson adds her congratulations to Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis' induction into the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, 1993

Getty Images

The song, essentially Easton singing about her vagina, angered the PMRC, but the record was huge and even won a Grammy. Less controversial was the song he wrote for The Bangles, *Manic Monday*, another huge worldwide hit.

Then, in late 1985, at the peak of his powers, Prince announced an end to touring (it would prove only temporary) and, the following year, he disbanded The Revolution. The hits were still coming (another huge album with *Around The World In A Day*) but this sudden move was a shock. The Revolution were his partners in crime, his creative peers. What was going on?

A year after being fired, Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman were none the wiser. In an interview with the *LA Times* to mark the pair's anniversary of leaving the group and the release of debut Wendy & Lisa hit *Waterfall*, they were still confused about what had happened, and both say they never saw it coming. "If we'd been looking, there were probably signs," said Melvoin. "But maybe the signs were there and we just didn't want to see them."

Watching all of this from a short distance away, across town in Minneapolis, were two other people still sore about how they had been jettisoned from Prince's world – Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. In the years since *Just Be Good To Me* they had been gathering industry cache and hit singles with Cherelle (1985's *Saturday Love*) and, in particular, with Alexander O'Neal (*If You Were Here Tonight* in early 1986 was the first of many 'solo' hits the three would share). All those triumphs, however, paled beside the success they had with Janet Jackson on a series of albums that began with *Control* in 1986.

Janet Jackson had spent much of the Eighties adjusting to life as a devoted sister to the world's most famous person while also attempting to carve her own path. It was not easy. The Jackson family were a tight-knit operation and Janet wanted to break free. After a couple of moderately successful albums, recorded under her father's wing, Janet was introduced to Jam and Lewis by John McClain, a senior exec at her label, without her dad Joe knowing a thing about it. Joe was livid at McClain, but the damage (to him) was done. Janet had bonded with the two producers and plans were already being made to relocate her to Minnesota. Her dad was out – and Janet was glad.

"I just wanted to get out of the house, get out from under my father," she reflected after the separation, "which was one of the most difficult things that I had to do, telling him that I didn't want to work with him again."

So Janet relocated from sunny LA to freezing cold Minneapolis, sans father/manager Joe, and holed herself up inside Jam and Lewis' swish new studio complex, Flyte Time (the name The Time went under before Prince got hold of them). It took Janet a while to adjust – she really hated the cold and between every take would rush to sit on the radiator in the corner of the studio to warm up – but the three were on a mission. This wasn't going to be any album: it would be, according to Jimmy Jam, "an album that would be in every black home in America... we were going for the black album of all time."

As the weeks went on and the three bonded, they created a series of brilliant, state-of-the-art pop records with lyrics that reflected Janet's emancipation. There was the first single *What Have You Done For Me Lately*, a song about asserting yourself in relationships; *Nasty*, a riposte to aggressive Romeos; and *Let's Wait Awhile*, the big ballad from the album and a paean to sexual abstinence. Six huge US hit singles, a seventh in the UK and worldwide album sales of 14 million copies. That's how you break free.

Janet Jackson relocated to Minneapolis to record what Jimmy Jam said would be "an album that would be in every black home in America"



Next into the Flyte Time studios were The Human League, a little bruised after the disappointment of *Dare* follow-up *Hysteria* and in search of a new direction. The recording of *Crash* was beset by issues – the band's musicians were sidelined, both girls found the whole experience (and particularly the even-colder-than-Sheffield Minneapolis) "horrible" and Phil Oakey, who enjoyed the experience more than the others, grew to resent Jimmy and Terry's 'our way or the highway' approach, where the band's songs were disposed of in favour of the producers' own. No matter, the sessions produced the band's second US No. 1 single with *Human* and, in a 1995 interview with the website *Sound On Sound*, Oakey admitted the project had saved the band's career. "The Jam and Lewis album was just like being a puppet for four months. It was interesting to pick yourself out of the

industrial north of England and to dump yourself in Minneapolis. It was a great experience - but it wasn't our album."

Next up was another Janet Jackson project, the lyrically adventurous *Rhythm Nation 1814*, and big hit singles including *Escapade* and *Miss You Much*. Although never truly loved by the critics *...1814* sold more copies than *Control*, more than 20 million to date. The album was also to be a starting point for Jackson's first tour, which would go on to become the biggest debut tour in history.

The decade ended with another US No. 1 – with George Michael on *Monkey* – but the Nineties saw the duo reach new professional heights. Never short of confidence, Jam and Lewis entered into their third Janet collaboration – the album *Janet* in 1991 – with a wholly different financial approach. They wanted to become the world's best-paid producers and saw Jackson's label switch to Virgin as their opportunity to become just that. The bill? Three million dollars, a previously unheard-of amount for producers.

While Jam and Lewis were reaching dizzying heights, Prince entered a period of experimentation and independence

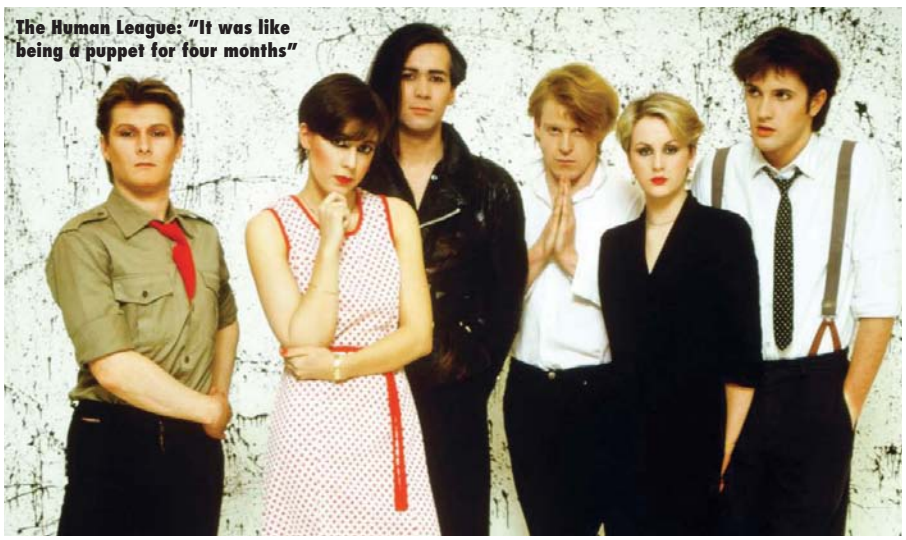
Now the pair were seen as utterly integral to Jackson's fortunes, and Richard Branson's gamble paid off when the album delivered yet more worldwide hit singles (most notably *That's The Way Love Goes*) and matched *Rhythm Nation*'s sales of 20 million. And then in 1995 came probably their most high profile hit – Janet and brother Michael's collaboration on *Scream*.

While Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis were reaching dizzying commercial heights and pulling off deals that would have made their old mentor proud, Prince himself entered a period of experimentation and independence. His first Revolution-less album *Parade* produced *Kiss* and *Girls And Boys*, while the second, *Sign o' The Times*, delivered a title track that was, to many, his finest ever moment (and one of the first hit songs to deal with the growing nightmare of AIDS) but these two both ushered in a period of considerable change in Prince's life. Album sales – particularly in the US – were falling, and arguments between artist and label grew. Prince was still hesitant about touring, disagreements about which singles should be released were becoming increasingly common, and as the Nineties progressed his attitude towards Warner Brothers became more and more militant.

In 1993 he declared he was no longer Prince but instead an unpronounceable symbol (and so he swiftly became referred to as The Artist Formerly Known As Prince). His work rate stayed high, but in Prince's mind that was so he could 'earn out' his contract.

Then, at the 1995 Brit Awards, a new low. Having been flown over by his label, he appeared on stage with the word 'Slave' written on his face. Enough was enough, and later than year 'Prince' and Warner Brothers parted company

Prince was never able to recapture his Eighties sales highs but his gigs are, still, legendary. You get the impression it really doesn't bother him. Collaborators have come and gone – the latest, 3rdeyegirl, appear at most of his concerts these days – but at the end of the day it's Prince who sustains. Odd, determined, brilliant Prince. What would we do without him?



The Human League: "It was like being a puppet for four months"

POP HERITAGE
SO MUCH TO ANSWER FOR
POP HERITAGE

Minneapolis

BEST 10 TRACKS

1999
PRINCE (1982)
One of the greatest singles every made. Truly, truly exhilarating

JUST BE GOOD TO ME
THE S.O.S. BAND (1983)
It's early days but you can hear the hallmarks of that full, heavy Jam & Lewis production on this dance smash

RASPBERRY BERET
PRINCE & THE REVOLUTION (1985)
You can pick any track from this period, but this one is a cut above

MANIC MONDAY
THE BANGLES (1986)
True, some bits are cheesy, but Prince's ode to the modern working girl is clever and spot-on. Still ace

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR ME LATELY
JANET JACKSON (1986)
Huge percussion ushers in the lead single from *Control*, a feisty anthem years before Spice Girl 'Girl Power'

TENDER LOVE
FORCE MDS (1986)
Maybe Jam & Lewis did too many ballads, but this is proper goosebumps

HUMAN
THE HUMAN LEAGUE (1986)
Best consumed whilst watching them do it on *TOTP*, this is possibly J&L (and the League's?) best moment

SIGN O' THE TIMES
PRINCE (1987)
So weird for the time – sparse, uncommercial – yet possibly his finest-ever moment. Still incredible

U GOT THE LOOK
PRINCE (1987)
Later that year, a full commercial hit with Sheena on co-vocals

RHYTHM NATION
JANET JACKSON (1989)
An exercise in production, perhaps, rather than a proper song – but still epic... and what a video!

LISTEN UP!
Minneapolis offers up one mighty playlist - available now on Spotify...
http://www.classicpopmag.com/category/playlists/

THE LOW DOWN



BANANARAMA

THE DEFINITIVE GIRL GROUP OF THE EIGHTIES, BANANARAMA ENCAPSULATED EVERYTHING THAT WAS FUN ABOUT POP MUSIC. YET BEHIND IT ALL THEY WERE THE ORIGINAL PURVEYORS OF WHAT WOULD LATER BECOME KNOWN AS GIRL POWER…

MARK LINDORES

When childhood friends Keren Woodward and Sara Dallin arrived in London in 1980, little did they know the fate the big city had in store for them. Intent of becoming fashion journalists, a series of chance encounters with a cast of influential scenesters transformed their destiny.

Striking up an instant friendship with Siobhan Fahey, the trio became permanent fixtures on London's vibrant club scene, their excessive partying eventually leading to them being evicted from the YWCA. The Sex Pistols' Paul Cook agreed to let them live above the band's old rehearsal rooms and, after hearing them playing and harmonising, he helped them record a demo tape which led to a deal with London Records.

Their debut single flopped but landed them in the pages of style bible *The Face*. Terry Hall was intrigued by the "three scruffy-looking girls", tracked them down, and invited them to appear on the next Fun Boy Three single, *It Ain't What You Do (It's The Way That You Do It)* giving them their first taste of chart success.

Having seared their existence on the public consciousness, the rambunctious Rams' gloriously shambolic TV performances and complete disregard for professionalism as they giggled their way through interviews established them as the girl gang that everyone wanted to be part of. Those traits, along with their tomboyish threads and tousled hair, they were the antithesis of what it had meant to be a girl group before.

They went on to dominate the Eighties, penning a string of impossibly catchy hits, first with Swain & Jolley, then with Stock/Aitken/Waterman, their bumbling image belying the girls' talent. Far from being pop puppets, they had a hand in writing all of their classic hits.

A change to a more polished sound and image in 1986 led the band to greater success which landed them in the *Guinness Book Of Records* as the most successful girl group of all-time, with 35 Top 40 singles and over 40 million records sold. An obvious influence on Girls Aloud, Sugababes, All Saints and Spice Girls, Bananarama have outlasted them all. They may have lost Siobhan and Jacquie, but Sara and Keren keep Bananarama alive.

THE MUST-HAVE ALBUMS



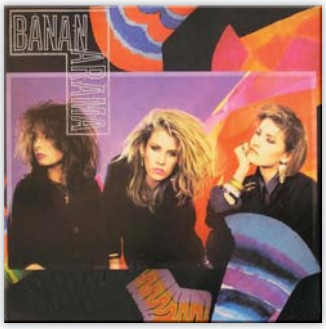
DEEP SEA SKIVING

1983

Liggers with attitude

Having experienced their first real taste of chart success on the Fun Boy Three's *It Ain't What You Do*, the girls' debut album came to define their early sound – unashamedly poppy, with punky undertones. By updating the doo-wop harmonies of the classic girl groups that preceded them and teaming them with a grungy, feisty image which remained true to the DIY ethos of punk, Bananarama's identity made them the definitive girl group of the Eighties.

Shy Boy, Really Saying Something and *Na Na Hey Hey (Kiss Him Goodbye)* gave them three Top 10 hits, while two of the album's other tracks – *Young At Heart* and the Paul Weller-penned *Doctor Love* – would go on to be hits for The Bluebells and Tracie respectively. Elsewhere, their rattly disco/funk debut *Aie A Mwana* flopped as a single – as did the sublime *Cheers Then*, despite its perky Von Trapp Family video – but the bouncy *Hey Young London, What A Shambles* and *Wish You Were Here* rounded off an album which (appalling artwork aside) reveals itself to be a collection of tropically-tinged pop gems, and more than worthy of its No. 7 chart position.



BANANARAMA

1984

Serious fun

Despite having achieved a string of hit singles, the girls were unhappy at the public's perception of them as happy-go-lucky pop puppets with a penchant for partying and decided to update their sound, instilling a dose of gritty realism into their lyrics to show a more socially aware side, while remaining true to the sound of their debut – if more polished. Having developed a rapport with songwriting/production duo Tony Swain and Steve Jolley during the *Deep Sea Skiving* sessions, the girls chose them to co-write and produce the entire record with them. Although it wasn't as successful as its predecessor, stalling at No. 16, *Bananarama* was a complete success in fulfilling the group's desire for a more serious direction, tackling issues such as drug addiction (*Hotline To Heaven*), sectarian violence in Ireland (*King Of The Jungle*), domestic abuse (*State I'm In*) and child poverty (*Rough Justice*) while maintaining their knack for delivering gorgeous pop melodies. Although a hook-laden triumph from beginning to end, *Bananarama*'s highlights are its two biggest hits, *Cruel Summer* and *Robert De Niro's Waiting* (see Must Hear Singles).



TRUE CONFESSIONS

1986

The weird go pro

Veering ever further into the self-imposed mature musical direction explored on *Bananarama, True Confessions* contains some of Bananarama's most accomplished songwriting and is a highlight of their catalogue. The sullen, moody, contemplative production suited them, despite being the polar opposite of the album's big hit, *Venus*. *Trick Of The Night*, which is about their friend who became a rent boy, is one of the finest things the girls ever put their name to, while *Ready Or Not* and *Promised Land* were both worthy of being released as singles, though a Stock Aitken Waterman remix of *More Than Physical* was the logical choice after *Venus*. The massive success of that song completely dictated the direction the group would head in from this point onwards. It was their sole US No. 1 and the major factor for *True Confessions* being their most successful album Stateside, while flopping in the UK. Promotional duties in the US and Keren's pregnancy meant the group were unable to promote the album here, hence its miserly No. 46 chart peak. Despite its underperformance, *True Confessions* is an integral album in Bananarama's history.



WOW!

1987

Separating sisters

Having deduced from the *True Confessions* era that the 'fun factor' was what most fans really wanted from Bananarama, the girls made the decision to work exclusively with Stock Aitken Waterman for their fourth album. Teaming up with the legendary hitmaking trio at their creative peak was a canny move which worked out well for Bananarama, and it did indeed reinvigorate their career. Frothy and fun, *Wow!* reimagined them as a perfectly polished pop entity armed with a stack of killer tracks. Songs like *Strike It Rich, Some Girls* and *Bad For Me* are just as good as the chosen singles, the run of which alienated some of their fans but earned them a bunch of new ones. The trio of hits, *I Heard A Rumour, I Can't Help It* and *Love In The First Degree* proved to be a bittersweet success, however, as they heralded the end of an era; Siobhan Fahey quit the group due to the drastic change of style. Subsequent hits *I Want You Back* and *Nathan Jones* were re-recorded with new member Jacquie O'Sullivan's vocals. From the title to the inclusion of a shirtless Bruno Tonlioni on the cover, *Wow!* is the epitome of campy pop fun.

AND THE REST...



Pop Life

1991

Despite the title and the inclusion of just one Stock Aitken Waterman track, *Pop Life* suffered commercially from the SAW backlash that was raging at the time of its release in 1991. The only Bananarama album to feature Jacquie O'Sullivan, it remains one of the band's most interesting and enjoyable albums. Experimenting with dance beats and loops courtesy of producer Youth, aka former Killing Joke bassist Martin Glover, the Rolling Stones-sampling *Only Your Love* proved too radical a change and flopped as the first single, with the poppier *Preacher Man* following in a bid to get the album campaign back on track, becoming the album's biggest hit. However, a much-maligned flamenco-inspired cover of the Doobie Brothers' stoner anthem *Long Train Running* and *Tripping On Your Love* also failed to set the charts alight, and *Pop Life* peaked at a disappointing No. 42.



Please Yourself

1993

Following the departure of Jacquie O'Sullivan, Sara and Keren decided to continue onwards as a duo, with the shift in dynamics proving unsettling for their first album as a two-piece. After returning to Stock & Waterman (Matt Aitken had left by this point) to work on an Abba-inspired project, *Please Yourself* was a major step backwards. As well as missing a member, the album came over like the work of a group who had lost its spark, with the limpid, disco-lite tracks on offer sounding dated even upon first release. First two singles *Moving On* and *Last Thing On My Mind* were both later covered by Steps, while a cover of Andrea True Connection's *More, More, More* remains a career low point. *Please Yourself* peaked at No. 46 and marked the end of Bananarama's relationship with London Records, their label since the beginning of their career.



Drama

2005

Thanks largely to Madonna's globe-conquering pop opus *Confessions On A Dancefloor*, disco and Abba samples were very much back in vogue in 2005, setting the scene perfectly for a Bananarama comeback. Released a week after Madonna's album, *Drama* marked a return to form. Like *Confessions…*, *Drama*'s sound is very much nu-disco, classic influences teamed with state-of-the-art modern production, making Bananarama sound relevant in the pop landscape alongside the likes of Goldfrapp and Robyn. First single *Move In My Direction* gave them their first Top 20 hit in 14 years, and the slick, polished electropop feel of tracks such as *Feel For You, Your Love Is Like A Drug* and *Love Bite* were the group's best material since *Pop Life*, while the album's highlight, the sublime *Look On The Floor (Hypnotic Tango)* was a dead cert for subsequent Best Of collections.



Viva

2009

Having signed to Fascination Records, home to Girls Aloud and The Saturdays, the original British girl group returned with an electro-inspired dance album which was the natural progression from *Drama*. Originally envisioned as a covers album with two new tracks, the plan was abandoned when the writing sessions with Ian Masterson went so well that they decided on a new album instead, with only three of the covers making the final tracklist. Although not as strong as *Drama*, *Viva* produced hits in *Love Comes* and *Love Don't Live Here Anymore*, the latter of which, along with *Tell Me Tomorrow*, are indicators of what a Bananarama/Pet Shop Boys collaboration would sound like. In Ian Masterson the girls had found a producer and co-writer who could help them realise material strong enough to rival their successors while retaining the inherent Bananarama DNA.

THE ESSENTIAL SINGLES



CRUEL SUMMER

1983

Pavements are burning

Originally released in June 1983 as a standalone single to keep the girls in the charts while they worked on their second album, the song's huge success meant the song was included on the *Bananarama* album when it was released 10 months later. A tropical-sounding mid-tempo tune, *Cruel Summer* was inspired by Siobhan Fahey's feelings of isolation and loneliness following the end of her relationship with her boyfriend, scuppering their plans, the previous summer. Once again written with and produced by Swain and Jolley, the song gave them their first taste of success in America after it was featured in *The Karate Kid* film. A swing-beat remix of the song by Freddy Bastone reached No. 19 as *Cruel Summer '89* in June 1989 coinciding with their first world tour and as the lead single of remix project which was shelved in the UK and limited to release in the Far East.



ROBERT DE NIRO'S WAITING

1984

Escaping into fantasy

Originally envisioned as a song dealing with the aftermath of the date-rape of a teenage girl, *Robert De Niro's Waiting* was toned down and rewritten with less controversial lyrics as radio was still reeling from Frankie Goes to Hollywood's *Relax* debacle and avoiding anything remotely sensitive at that time. Although the released version of *Robert De Niro's Waiting* retained the original concept, the references to rape were removed, and the song instead detailed a girl coping with an undisclosed trauma by retreating into a dream world where De Niro is her boyfriend. The song became a huge hit, reaching No. 3, and was the catalyst for a meeting with the actual Hollywood legend, who was so flattered by the song that he called the girls at home and invited them out for a drink. "We had to get really drunk beforehand because we were so nervous!" recalls Sara.



VENUS

1986

Goddesses on the mountain top

In the mid-Eighties Bananarama found themselves at a career crossroads, and with a string of underperforming singles to their name the band felt a change of direction was needed. Looking to the club scene for inspiration, they approached the then up-and-coming production team of Stock Aitken Waterman, the men behind their favourite song at the time, Dead Or Alive's *You Spin Me Round (Like A Record)* to produce a cover of Shocking Blue's *Venus* for them. At first SAW declined as they thought it was a terrible idea, but they were talked round by the group, who had been performing it since their early days and felt the time was right to put it on record. They were proved right when the song became one of their biggest-ever hits, topping the US charts in the summer of 1986 and going Top 10 here, completely changing Bananarama's musical identity from this point onwards.

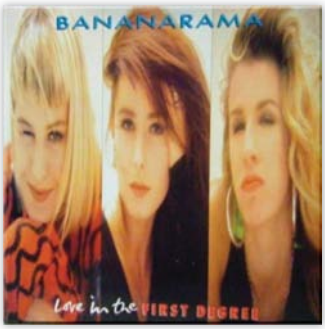


I HEARD A RUMOUR

1987

Polished perfection

If *Venus* had been responsible for the rebirth of Bananarama, then *I Heard A Rumour* was the point where their transformation came to fruition. Having left longtime collaborators Swain & Jolley for Stock Aitken Waterman for their fourth album, Bananarama released *I Heard A Rumour* as its lead single, a tantalising teaser for the pop perfection that was to follow. The soundtrack to the summer of 1987, *I Heard A Rumour* exemplifies SAW at their very best, though the sheen was slightly tarnished when they were sued for plagiarism on the grounds that the song ripped off Michael Fortunati's 1986 Europop hit *Give Me Up* (the case was settled out of court). The song, which has been cited by the girls themselves and Pete Waterman as a favourite, reached No. 14 in the UK but was an even bigger hit in the US where it peaked at No. 4 following its appearance in The Fat Boys' film *Disorderlies*.



LOVE IN THE FIRST DEGREE

1987

Siobhan breaks out

The pinnacle of the band's SAW period, *Love In The First Degree* became their biggest-ever UK single, reaching No. 3 in October 1987. The song's ultra-poppy, fun tone belied the tensions that marred its creation. Feeling they were heading too far away from their original ethos, Siobhan Fahey left the group in 1988 following a performance of this song at the BPI Awards, surrounded by a bevvy of near-naked male dancers (actually, a definitive Bananarama moment). It was to be Siobhan's last appearance with the group until 2002. Special mention for the B-side, a reworking of SAW's *Roadblock* entitled *Mr Sleaze*, one of Bananarama's most fun tracks and a huge club hit at the time.



PREACHER MAN

1990

It's like a magic

Having left Stock Aitken Waterman in favour of Youth's cutting-edge dance production for the *Pop Life* album, the group were dismayed when *Only Your Love* – a drastic departure with its Madchester influence – underperformed. *Preacher Man* was the remedy, and fusing Youth's pulsating beats with an irresistibly catchy pop melody made for a perfect meeting of new and old Bananarama. A harmonica solo from legendary bluesman Johnny Mars was added as a nod to America's Deep South. *Preacher Man* is one of the 'Rams' most underrated singles and just scraped into the Top 20 in December 1990, but some amazing remixes from remixer/producer Shep Pettibone hit big in the UK and US club charts.

ONLY FOR THE BRAVE



Ultra Violet

1995

Originally released in Japan as *I Found Love*, Bananarama's seventh album continued their descent into Europop/dance hell. With the exception of *Every Shade Of Blue*, the songs were largely identikit dance tracks made for the tackiest of nightclubs.



Exotica

2001

Exclusively released in France, Bananarama's eighth contained awful dance reworkings of some of their greatest hits (*I Heard A Rumour, Cruel Summer*), plus an ill-advised cover of *Careless Whisper* and a handful of forgettable, badly-produced club tracks.

SHHH NEED TO KNOW

- **Bananarama's name was inspired by Roxy Music's *Pyjamarama*. After recording their debut single, *Aie A Mwana* in Swahili, they used 'Banana' because it "sounded tropical".**
- **They were the only act to appear on both the original Band Aid single and the 1989 Band Aid II version of *Do They Know It's Christmas?***
- **Bananarama's music has been in a number of films: *Cruel Summer* was in *The Karate Kid, The Wild Life* was in the film of the same name, *I Heard A Rumour* was used in *Disorderlies* and the Daryl Hall-produced *Riskin' A Romance* was featured in *The Secret Of My Success* – but their greatest celluloid moment is the scene in *Rita, Sue & Bob Too* in which Rita and Sue dance round the living room while *More Than Physical* is on TV.**
- **After joining the group midway through the *Wow!* album campaign, Jacquie O'Sullivan re-recorded *I Want You Back* and *Nathan Jones* for their single releases. *Love, Truth & Honesty*, written and recorded with Stock, Aitken & Waterman in 1988, is O'Sullivan's sole writing credit from her four years in the group.**

THE MUST-WATCH VIDEOS

CRUEL SUMMER

DIRECTOR: BRIAN SIMMONS

Following a string of videos for which they appeared to have a budget of approximately 50p, Bananarama insisted on shooting a video in New York simply because they had always wanted to go there. Unfortunately they arrived in the Big Apple in the middle of a heatwave with temperatures hitting over one hundred degrees, which made things tricky – for a little while.

"We repaired to a tavern for lunch and met a bunch of dockworkers and they all had these little vials of coke," revealed Siobhan. "We were exhausted and they gave us very generous bumps. That was our lunch. We look really tired and miserable in the scenes we shot before lunch, and then the after-lunch shots are all euphoric and manic." The video had a very loose plotline based on *The Dukes Of Hazzard*, with the trio first fiddling under the hood of a car and then being pursued by two cops, making good their escape in a truck while lobbing bananas out of the windows. **www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ePIZugahFc**

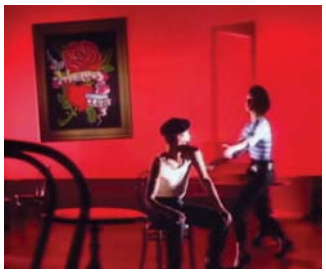


VENUS

DIRECTOR: PETER CARE

Just as they had undergone a change musically with *Venus*, Bananarama also made a drastic shift towards a much more glamorous, sexy image. The once-grungy girls were now writhing coquettishly among licks of flame, transformed into Grecian goddesses, their backcombed tresses and dungarees replaced by PVC devil catsuits, vampire outfits and French seductress costumes. The video also marked the debut of the semi-naked male dancers, including choreographer Bruno Tonlioni, that would become a regular fixture in Bananarama videos in the future.

The girls revelled in their change of look: "We had so much fun on that video," recalled Keren Woodward. "What girl doesn't want to get dressed up and pretend to be Joan Collins for the day?!" The video achieved heavy rotation on MTV in the US and was seen as an integral factor for *Venus* topping the US charts – their first, and only, American No. 1 hit. **www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkcU2_Vs7Xw**



I CANT HELP IT

DIRECTOR: ANDY MORAHAN

This, the final Bananarama promo to feature the original three-piece line-up, provides a neat demonstration of just how much their look and sound had evolved in the six years since their debut. As well as being a stylish technical effort mixing grainy textures with a neat colour/monochrome effect, *I Can't Help It* was the band's steamiest video to date, with footage of the three pouting their way through the song interspersed with scenes of them cavorting with shirtless backup dancers on satin sheets, fingering flowers suggestively, and sloshing about in a bath of milk with fruit in it (Siobhan didn't participate in the video's sexier scenes and was only filmed from the waist up as she was pregnant at the time). The girls were so pleased with their look in the video that fashion photographer Herb Ritts arrived on set to photograph them for the single cover. The shoot was also used for the cover of their Greatest Hits collection the following year. **www.youtube.com/watch? v=6_dtG1arNhc**



HELP

DIRECTOR: ANDY MORAHAN

Following successful Comic Relief singles from Cliff Richard & The Young Ones and Mel Smith & Kim Wilde, Bananarama teamed up with Dawn French, Jennifer Saunders and Kathy Burke for a cover of The Beatles' *Help!* in 1989. Having had Bananarama as subjects for a number of sketches on their show, the three comediennes appeared in the suitably hilarious video dressed as the trio, mimicking their dance routines as fictional girl group Lanaeneeneenoonoo. With Dawn as Keren, Jennifer as Sara and Kathy as "Kim"/Jacquie, the girls' depiction evoked memories of Bananarama's own bumbling choreography in their earlier videos which had by now been replaced with more polished routines, and while the girls performed with their usual hunky dancers, French & Saunders brought on Raw Sex – skinny, pasty men armed with cigarettes and beer. The skit was such a success that French & Saunders recreated the send-up with the Spice Girls in 1987. **www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k3zldfP6LI**



I Can't Help It was the band's steamiest video to date, with the trio pouting their way through the song, cavorting with shirtless backup dancers on satin sheets, fingering flowers suggestively, and sloshing about in a bath of milk with fruit in it

WHAT'S NEXT?

***Megarama*, a 3CD collection of rare and unreleased Bananarama remixes has just been released, and fans can also look forward to new material later this year, as Sara and Keren have been busily writing and recording over in the US.**

In the meantime, fans can see the girls throughout the summer as they are once again taking part in various festivals, including Rewind Festival. After years of avoiding such events, they have become stalwarts of the circuit. "We always refused to do those Eighties tours but we did a tour of stately homes in 2007 and it was such a laugh and we had such a great time we just thought, why not?" says Sara. "We even played the Isle Of Wight Festival a few years ago," adds Keren, "and we were really worried that no-one would turn up to our set, but we had something like 20,000 people singing every word of *Robert De Niro's Waiting* back at us. It's been fantastic."

"WE WERE WORRIED NO-ONE WOULD TURN UP, BUT WE HAD ABOUT 20,000 PEOPLE SINGING *ROBERT DE NIRO'S WAITING* BACK AT US" – KEREN

LISTEN UP!

Zip over to Spotify for a special playlist of some of our Bananarama faves...

❶ I Heard A Rumour
First single from *Wow!*

❷ Cruel Summer
The band's first US hit

❸ Robert De Niro's Waiting
The girls get serious

❹ Love In The First Degree
Their biggest UK single

❺ Venus
Their only US No. 1

❻ Preacher Man
Biggest hit from *Pop Life*

❼ Trick Of The Night
Highlight of *True Confessions*

❽ Shy Boy
First Top 10 hit credited solely to Bananarama

❾ Look On The Floor (Hypnotic Tango)
Best song from *Drama*

❿ Only Your Love
Underrated single from *Pop Life*

⓫ Na Na Hey Hey
Cover from *Deep Sea Skiving*

⓬ I Want You Back
First single with Jacquie

⓭ Rough Justice
Single about child poverty and social injustice

⓮ Love, Truth & Honesty
Classic S/A/W single

⓯ Love Don't Live Here
2009 single from *Viva*

⓰ Move In My Direction
First Top 20 hit in 15 years

⓱ I Can't Help It
Final single with Siobhan

⓲ Really Saying Something
Back again with Fun Boy Three

⓳ Help!
1989 Comic Relief single

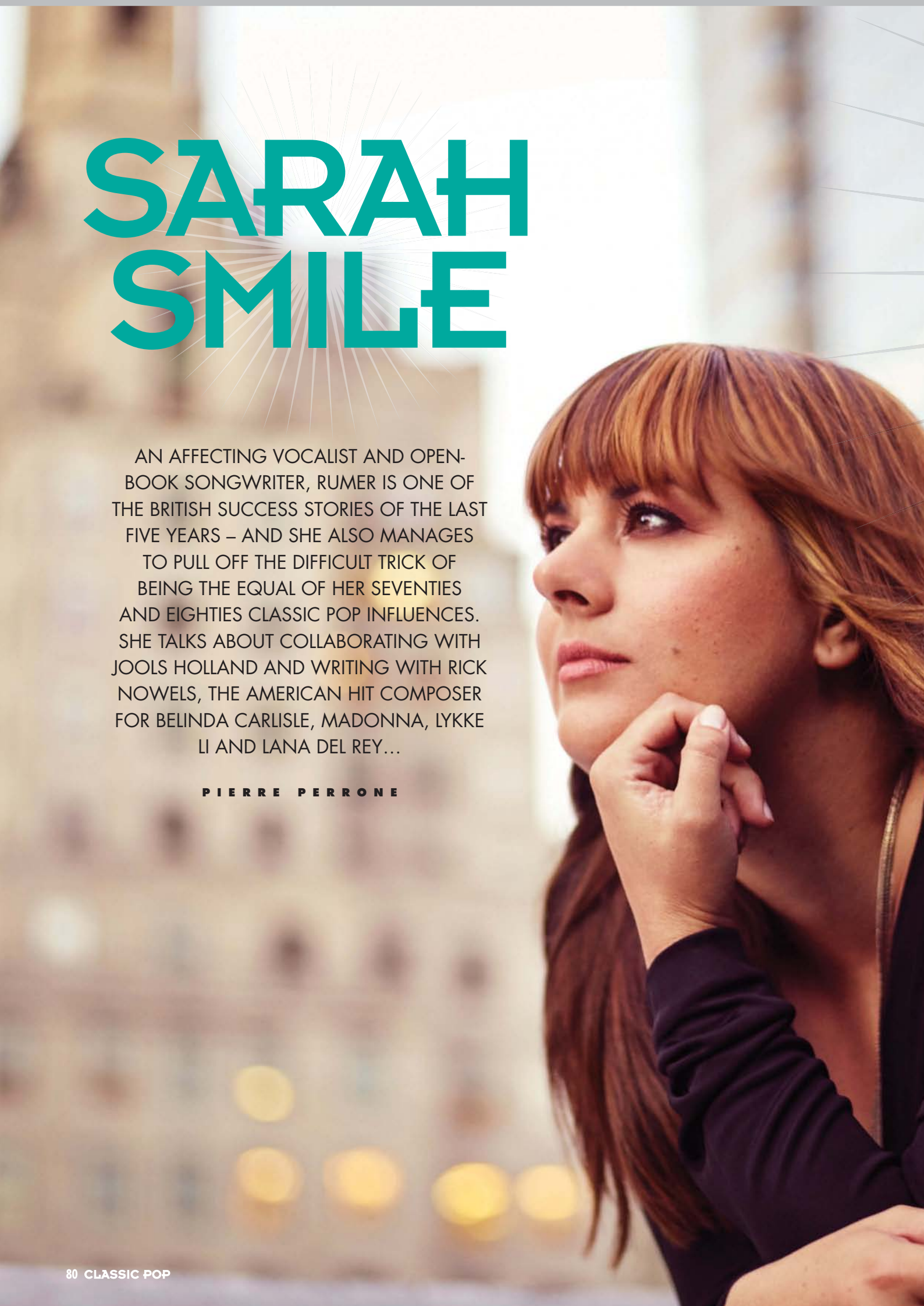
⓴ More Than Physical
S/A/W remix was a huge improvement

http://www.classicpopmag.com/category/playlists/

SARAH SMILE

AN AFFECTING VOCALIST AND OPEN-BOOK SONGWRITER, RUMER IS ONE OF THE BRITISH SUCCESS STORIES OF THE LAST FIVE YEARS – AND SHE ALSO MANAGES TO PULL OFF THE DIFFICULT TRICK OF BEING THE EQUAL OF HER SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES CLASSIC POP INFLUENCES. SHE TALKS ABOUT COLLABORATING WITH JOOLS HOLLAND AND WRITING WITH RICK NOWELS, THE AMERICAN HIT COMPOSER FOR BELINDA CARLISLE, MADONNA, LYKKE LI AND LANA DEL REY…

PIERRE PERRONE





"I am a child of the Eighties. I was seven years old when Belinda Carlisle hit the charts in 1987. I was reading *Smash Hits* – Rick Astley, Kylie Minogue . . . I was a big Madonna fan. Yeah, I love all that music," Rumer tells *Classic Pop*. It's been an extraordinary few years for the Pakistan-born singer, from her beginnings with London folk/poppers La Honda and Rumer & The Denials to the success of her solo album *Seasons Of My Soul* in 2010, then a collaboration EP with Burt Bacharach, then her Seventies covers album *Boys Don't Cry*, and now her new album *Into Colour*. From London to California, taking in the Royal Albert Hall and the White House, it's been a journey indeed for the singer now known as Rumer, but born Sarah Joyce…

At the moment you're guesting with Jools Holland and sharing the stage with Marc Almond and Ruby Turner as well as Louise Marshall. How does that feel?
I was really frightened, but I just went straight in! They are way more experienced than I am. Marc Almond is a lovely guy, really sweet. I could learn a hell of a lot from people like Jools, Marc and from those women. They are proper, professional singers, they do it night after night after night. They have a lot more gigs under their belt than I have. Those players are absolutely red hot.

"BOYS DON'T CRY WAS A PLACE TO BURY MY MISERY, PUT THE SADNESS IN – I WAS REALLY IN THE DEPTHS. I STILL REALLY ENJOY IT"

How did you choose *Lost Mind*, the track you recorded for *Sirens Of Song*, the recent Jools Holland album featuring singers like yourself, Kylie, Melanie C and Emeli Sandé?
Both Jools and I love Percy Mayfield, a great writer of blues ballads, including *Please Send Me Someone To Love* and *Lost Mind*. They're good songs that go beyond genre. Jools wanted to put his *Lost Mind* on the album. It's a different style of singing, a bit more sassy, a different type of discipline. I'd love to do an album with Jools, explore some old time swing and jazz.

In 2012 you released *Boys Don't Cry*, an album of covers of songs by Todd Rundgren, Hall & Oates and Jimmy Webb. Was there a measure of therapy in picking the material?
That album was named after the turn of phrase, not The Cure song. It was just a place to bury all my misery, to put all the sadness in, because I was really in the depths of how bad things got with my depression. I was struggling to get out of it. Songs like *Be Nice To Me* and *Travelin' Boy* made the album an interesting kind of journey. I still really enjoy it.

Would you consider making another covers album tackling material from the Eighties?
No, but diving into catalogue is one of my hobbies. I wouldn't mind taking a composer like Stephen Bishop or Terry Reid and selecting 10 songs from a hundred or so, like a curator, to do a songbook album.

Tell us the story behind *Into Colour*, your current album...
We'd had a long winter in the UK, and I got a visa and flew to California. I ended up living on the edge of Laurel Canyon. I didn't know anyone and I couldn't drive but I needed to change my environment. When you have clinical depression, it's good to go somewhere mindbogglingly different and try and shock yourself out of that mindset. I just went for it. I was fortunate to find new friends that were cool and fascinating. I rented a house from a modern hippie family; he was an inventor, she was a film producer, they had a couple of kids, loads of animals. God bless that place, it was magical. Stephen Bishop lived over the hill so I went to his house and we wrote *Sam*. He's such a good guy, so funny, fantastic. The feel of the song was always there and I wrote most of the lyrics but Stephen helped me with *Baby, Come Back To Bed* and a little bit of *Dangerous*.

***Dangerous* also involved Rick Nowels, the composer for Stevie Nicks, Belinda Carlisle, Madonna, Dido, Lykke Li and Lana Del Rey.**
Rick wanted to write with me and I said "Can Stephen Bishop come, because he can drive me to Santa Monica?" A lot of songwriters don't want anyone to work with them, but both were cool with the idea. The three of us came up with the chorus hook for *Sam* and I worked on it some more with Rob [Shirakbari, her fiancé, producer and musical director] and Sophie Delila. There were quite a lot of people on that record – it was a proper pop writing experience.

"PF SLOAN WAS ONE OF THE GREAT LOST TALENTS. I'M SO GRATEFUL I GOT TO MEET HIM AND THAT WE WENT ON THAT ADVENTURE TOGETHER"

Does this type of collaboration change your view of yourself as a singer-songwriter?
When I did *Seasons Of My Soul* I needed to prove that I could do it by myself, that I wasn't just another girl who has a producer writing songs for her. I was quite protective and defensive of anyone trying to write with me. Steve Brown was the only one: he did *Aretha, Thankful* and *Am I Forgiven?* And Greg Churchill co-wrote *Healer*. Once I'd proved that to myself and everybody, I didn't care. And, to be honest, I didn't have the 10 years I had writing my first album, so my process had to change.

I really enjoyed learning to collaborate. It's a different skill. I wasn't so defensive. I was freed up. Songs are very personal and you don't like everybody's ideas and not everybody likes yours, so it can be a tricky situation. Rick's got a lot of passion and drive, so you always get something interesting. He works so fast that your judgment goes out of the window. It's just ideas, ideas, ideas and you record it all and listen back and think "That's interesting – if I'd thought too much, I wouldn't have had that idea."

You have a strong affinity with singer-songwriters of the Seventies and Eighties, like PF Sloan and Christopher Cross. Are you on a mission to bring them back?
I don't really think of it in terms of bringing people back. PF Sloan was one of the great lost talents, and I'm so grateful that I got to meet him and that we're friends and that we went on that adventure together. I'd love to do a duet with Christopher Cross. They're a really fantastic bunch of people, I feel like they're my tribe. I could do a Todd Rundgren songbook album! *Rumer Sings Todd* [hums *Love Is The Answer*, one of Rundgren's compositions]…

Did the success of your first album create its own set of problems? You were even invited to sing at the White House for a tribute concert for Bacharach and David...
Looking in the rear view mirror, I can't tell you the nerves I had at the White House. I was so scared, but I did it. When artists are signed to a major label they usually have a year to acclimatise to the system, get to know the people and then make an album. Mine was done, so I was literally going from the struggle of trying to make an album to my boss at the label being so excited about it. I had a lot of opportunities and I can't dismiss the value of having mass marketing in terms of reaching people in different countries. But art and commerce is a very, very awkward dance. Sometimes, as a musician, an artist in the corporate world, you feel like a minority. I'm looking to the future and thinking about a sustainable model for me to remain healthy and creative, to be able to perform without getting ill. The right balance.

With all the problems you've experienced – being diagnosed with bipolar disorder and ADHD – do you feel music has pulled you through the difficult times?
Music has been the gift I've got in exchange for the hard things I've been through, for not having a dad or having a dead mother or a shitty childhood or whatever. That was the deal. I got the music. It's been brilliant. Music has been a pal.

You're getting married to Rob Shirakbari, the producer and musical director you met while working with Burt Bacharach. It all worked out very well...
When I think about where I was a couple of years ago, and where I am now, it's pretty amazing. I've managed to claw back my health, my sanity and be normal. I'm happy that I got to make another album, to complete that sort of trilogy I suppose. I'm happy to share that journey with people. I feel like I've definitely closed a door, a lid on sadness for sure. For good.





THE BLOW MONKEYS

DOCTOR'S ORDERS



THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THE BLOW MONKEYS WERE ONE OF THE FINEST EXPONENTS OF SOPHISTIPOP. BUT IT DIDN'T STOP THERE. WITH THEIR NINTH ALBUM DUE IN APRIL, DR ROBERT SURVEYS HIS 33-YEAR ODYSSEY FROM PIN-UP TO RED WEDGER, SOLO VOYAGER, AND BEYOND…

PAUL LESTER

"There is some cachet attached to being a musician here, which is nice," says Robert Howard of his home for the last decade and a half, a village in Andalusia. "When I lived in Cambridgeshire, being a musician was like having a disease."

Howard moved to southern Spain in 2001, having grown tired of the increasingly homogenised nature of British towns. After almost 10 years with The Blow Monkeys and a further 10 as a solo artist and musician for hire (mainly for Paul Weller), the nomadic Howard, accustomed to changing countries ever since his childhood, felt ready to move once more. Today, with his children all grown up and back in Britain – his son is involved in the East London electronic scene, his daughter is in Leeds studying film – Howard is in, as he puts it, an "energised" mood. The former heavy smoker and drinker suffered a heart attack in 2012 but he's now back to rude health, and having reformed The Blow Monkeys in 2008, he is also in superb musical form. In April the band release their ninth album, *If Not Now, When?*, a fresh, vital amalgam of the glam, soul and rock'n'roll influences of Howard's youth. "I feel reinvigorated," says the artist widely known as Dr Robert. "This is easily the best thing we've ever done."



Growing up, you moved from Scotland to Norfolk to Australia to London...
I was born in Haddington, East Lothian, but we left when I was young. Then we moved to King's Lynn, a London overflow town, a funny sort of place. They had a soul scene, and a record shop called the Soul Bowl where they sold imports. But it was also quite a violent place. Then we moved to Australia when I was 17, just after my dad died. In Sydney, I picked up the guitar and started busking. I went to Sydney University for six weeks. I wrote a couple of reviews for Australian rock magazine *RAM*, where I met my first wife, Linda, a rock photographer. I told people later that I'd interviewed Ramones and Blondie, but that was bullshit.

You came back to London in 1981 just as ABC, Stimulin, Funkapolitan and synthpop were breaking. Did you have similar aims to Martin Fry: to subvert, or deconstruct, pop artifice and glamour?
No, I wasn't a theorist like Martin. I was just interested in the humble pursuit of writing songs. I'd seen The Saints in Sydney, and they blew my mind. I loved The Laughing Clowns, the band Ed Kuepper formed after The Saints. They had a bebop drummer and a slightly out-of-tune Fela Kuti-style horn section, with Kuepper thrashing away on guitar. That was the blueprint for The Blow Monkeys.

How did you come upon the names The Blow Monkeys and Dr Robert?
Blow Monkeys was something that Angus [Hines, first drummer] came up with one night when he was tripping. Dr Robert… when you're starting out, you think you need a name to hide behind. It was a quick decision for the first album sleeve, and it's been the bane of my life since.

Where did you play in the early days?
Totally inappropriate places like The Bridge House in

Canning Town where all the Oi! bands used to play. We had some posters made up with our name on as "TBMs", and a few skinheads turned up, expecting something to do with The British Movement! I think when they got a look at me, with my make-up and spiky hair, they knew they were in the wrong place.

Some of your lyrics suggested you were gay. Not that it matters, but were you?
It doesn't matter, but I wasn't. Stuff like *Digging Your Scene* [about AIDS] came out of me going to gay clubs like Taboo. A lot of my friends were gay, I enjoyed gay culture, but I'm not gay and never was.

Were you affected by the release of The Smiths' *Hand In Glove* in summer '83?
I remember listening to it on the *John Peel Show* and thinking, "I don't know where that's coming from". It felt new and exciting. I also loved Orange Juice, and Edwyn Collins' arch, ironic love songs. *You Can't Hide Your Love Forever* [OJ's 1982 debut album] is massively underrated.

You also had one foot in the Sixties, in the crafted pop of Burt Bacharach...
My two sisters and my mum were massive pop fans: Petula Clark, Dusty Springfield, Cilla, Sandie Shaw. That Bacharach-David thing is deeply embedded in me. I also loved Arthur Lee and Scott Walker – only Julian Cope was flying the flag for Scott Walker at that time.

So all this fed into *Limping For A Generation*?
Yeah. I was kind of making it up as I went along. The songs on that album are a bit odd – some of them are like five or six songs in one. They change direction. I really didn't know the rules.

You'd signed to RCA by this point. Were they trying to steer you in a certain direction?
No. The guy who signed us left after two weeks, and they didn't know what to do with us. They put us into rehearsals for eternity, and we went on tour with bands like Lloyd Cole & The Commotions. By the second album [1986's *Animal Magic*], this young kid called Korda Marshall [later, head of Warners and Infectious] had become our A&R man and we started to get better. We got Pete Wilson in to do the production and did it at Solid Bond, Paul Weller's studio. Pete was great at interpreting my Sixties pop fascination with strings and everything. It was Korda



The Blow Monkeys at the infamous Monnow Valley studios in Wales, where they recorded their new album

POP_UP The Blow Monkeys encounted The Smiths at a *TOTP* session. "Morrissey was moaning that his song was going to go down and ours was going to go up"

who told us to go to New York and remix *Digging Your Scene* with this guy from Arthur Baker's studio. I watched them take my song apart and replace it with machines. It was fascinating. I went back to the band and said, "Do you want the good news or the bad news? The good news is, I think it's a hit. The bad news is, I don't think we're on it."

We did the *Wogan* show, and went from playing to 3-400 people to 2,000 overnight. I was getting pushed as a pop star, with my face only on the front of records. I went along with it for a while, but I don't think it did me, or the band, any favours. I wasn't very good at it. I couldn't be Mr Showbiz. I kept putting my foot in it. I was too nervy, spiky, political. In fact, after the first time we went on *Top Of The Pops*, I went down to the chip shop and none of the girls knew it was me. They touched up my face on the cover of *Animal Magic* to such an extent that the teenyboppers who used to come backstage didn't recognise me. They were expecting someone who looked like Morten Harket.

Were you friends with any Eighties stars?
Through Red Wedge, I became friends with Paul Weller and Mick Talbot. I went on the second Red Wedge tour. That was the first time I felt part of anything. I got a lot of flak for it – people said I'd joined because I thought it was something to do with haircuts – but I knew my politics. I met Richard Cole of The Communards, and Rhoda Dakar of The Specials became a good friend.

DR ROBERT: THE SOLO YEARS

"I wanted a positive, up, funky album' - Dr. Robert on If Not Now, When?



"I did *Bethesda* with Alan White on drums – two weeks later he joined Oasis. I recorded *Other Folk* in four days – *Grocer's Daughter* took four months and cost stupid money. These were all under-the-radar releases, small budgets, no advertising or marketing. I was doing pubs and folk clubs with an acoustic, really enjoying it. It felt real. I needed to get far away from floppy fringes, cheekbones, make-up. *Flatlands* was recorded on cassette in my bedroom. By *Birds Gotta Fly* I knew it was time to get the family out of the UK. In 2007 I was playing guitar in the corner of a party in the Spanish mountains, as you do, singing Curtis Mayfield songs, and PP Arnold started joining in and I recognised her. We recorded an album for a label called Curb, which went bust two weeks later. So it's become a rarity, which is a laugh, because they're all rare!"



You worked with Curtis Mayfield and Kym Mazelle, reggae stars Eek-A-Mouse and Sylvia Teller, even raï musician Cheb Khaled. Good experiences?
Curtis was obviously a bit special. He was playing Dingwalls [London venue], staying at a hotel on Tottenham Court Road, so I went up there. I gave him a cassette of *The Day After You (Celebrate)*, told him what it was about, and he came to the studio the next day. I was shitting myself. But I did my best Curtis impression. He was such a lovely man.

***She Was Only A Grocer's Daughter* (1987) and *Whoops! There Goes The Neighbourhood* (1989) were very in tune with the musical movements of the day...**
I'd shared a flat with someone called Hector who DJ'd at The Wag. He became a very important influence on me later on, with dance music. We lived in a flat on Brixton High Street, above Red Records. When we toured America Hector gave me a list of records to get from a shop in Chicago so I came back with all this vinyl. I checked out all the early Marshall Jefferson stuff, which is where I found Kym Mazelle. But I was moving too fast, for the audience and the band. I felt this need to keep progressing... probably the wrong thing to do in terms of a career. If I really wanted to be one of the big Eighties bands, I should have carried on writing songs like *Digging Your Scene*. But that wasn't me.

What do you make of your last album, *Springtime For The World*, now?
It was pretty much a solo album. It was just me with a sampler, and the boys playing over the top. Our audience must have thought, "What the hell is this?"

What did the record company say?
"What the hell is this?!" I thought the title track was going to be a hit but it just didn't get any airplay. By that time *La Passionara* was getting played – people like Paul Oakenfold were taking it on – and I said, "This should be a single". But the label said, "There are no vocals on it!" The belief had gone.

What were relations like in the band?
Always good. We were touring – that's always been our bread and butter. And we were still playing big gigs. The last one we did was at the Town & Country [now the Forum], and it was sold out. Obviously, though, the band felt a bit isolated by the experience of making *Springtime*..., and that was my fault.

How did the end come?
Springtime... hadn't done that well, we'd been together for 10 years, and it felt like the right time. I had a young family and I was losing interest in the dance thing. I was listening more to singer-songwriters. I wanted to make some solo records.



You worked with Paul Weller, and also with Benny Staples of The Woodentops...
Yes, for Starjuice, a two-man outfit featuring a bizarre mix of drum machine and acoustic guitar. We did a few gigs supporting Paul, and his audience was totally perplexed by what we were doing. As were we.

Then you went solo with *Realms Of Gold*.
Yes, that was probably my best album. I went and lived in the country, in Oxfordshire. I needed to educate myself about the roots of music, even if I didn't want to become a traditional singer-songwriter.

Why did the band decide to reform in 2008?
It felt like unfinished business. Our kids had flown the nest, so I went to London and asked the band, and they said yes. But it had to be new music, not the nostalgia circuit. We've made four albums in six years.

The new one is called *If Not Now, When?*...
That's because we're not about the past. Groups like ABC and The Human League only play old songs. Maybe we're lucky that we weren't as big as them. We have the manoeuvrability to make new records.

There's a lot of glam, and funk, on this one.
They used to call us "glam-jazz" so I guess we've come full circle. I wanted a positive, up, funky album. It's a restatement of faith in the transcendent nature of pop.

Where do you think The Blow Monkeys fit?
Oh, that's for people like you to write. That's why I never made it as a journalist.

The missing link between Bacharach and The Birthday Party?
There you go. That's good.

"It had to be new music, not the nostalgia circuit... because we're not about the past" - Dr. Robert



REISSUES AND BEYOND

WITH RECORD STORE DAY ON THE HORIZON, *CLASSIC POP* ROUNDS UP THE BEST OF THE LATEST VINYL RELEASES, FROM YOKO ONO'S REMARKABLE BIRTHDAY TO THE LATEST BOWIE COLLECTABLES…

JOHN EARLS

When Record Store Day began eight years ago, the vinyl resurgence was still in its infancy and it looked as if downloads were here to stay. Now downloads have been overtaken by streaming and CDs are roughly as relevant as cassettes were in 1993, while vinyl sales will doubtless pass the one million mark for a second consecutive year. Record stores themselves were in crisis too when RSD launched in 2008, having fallen from 734 in 2005 to 305 just three years later – but the event has enough clout these days to appoint Dave Grohl as its ambassador, with the Foo Fighters singer commenting: "I believe the power of the record store to inspire is still alive and well, and that their importance



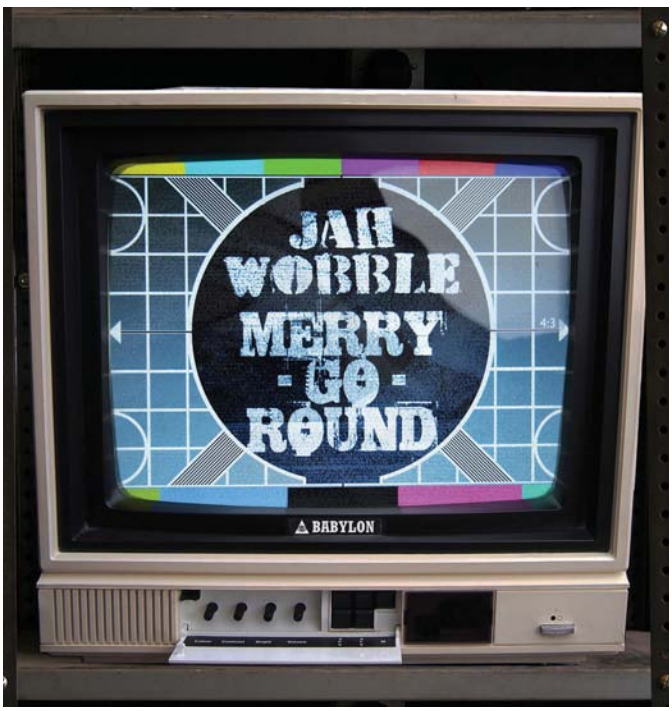
ROXY MUSIC – THE COMPLETE STUDIO ALBUMS

All eight of Roxy Music's albums stretching from 1972's self-titled debut to *Avalon* a decade later were reissued in a sumptuous CD box in 2012. The accompanying vinyl box is worth the wait, though at £185 – £23 per album – it's not cheap. At least the albums, each one remastered by engineer Miles Schowell at Abbey Road, are pressed on 180gm heavyweight vinyl and come with a download code. Each album features the original artwork, including reproductions of the inner sleeves, plus lyric sheets in a glossy finish.



JAH WOBBLE – REDUX

The main focus of the former Public Image Ltd mainstay's current activity is a 6CD box-set, *ReDux*, which rounds up his output since 1978. However, there's also a separate vinyl album of the box's sixth disc, which features exclusive cover versions by the bass maestro. The nine covers include Wobble's interpretations of the themes to *The Persuaders, Get Carter, The Sweeney, The Good The Bad And The Ugly* and *Midnight Cowboy* and a sparky take on *Take Five*. The main box is divided into themed selections – Greatest Hits, The Eighties, world, ambient, and jazz. There's also a new single, *Merry Go Round*, coinciding with the box-set. Wobble is setting out on a lengthy tour in May.



to the next generation of musicians is crucial. Take an afternoon (and some hard-earned lawnmowing money) and support them. You never know, it might change your life forever, like it did mine."

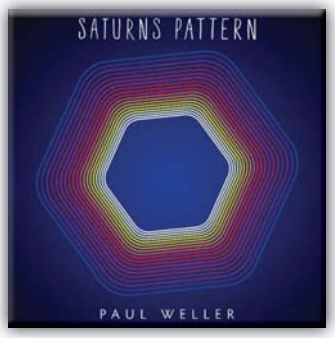
The latest RSD on April 18 has announced several tasty-looking exclusives. As well as those below from Dexys, Bowie and Empire Of The Sun come a Tears For Fears 12" of *Shout* and a 40th anniversary reissue of Grace Jones' debut single *I Need A Man,* plus releases from Siouxsie & The Banshees, OMD, and many more. Watch out for accompanying gigs and signing sessions throughout independent stores.

The day has had its critics, ever since Blur's ultra-limited comeback single *Fool's Day* sold out instantly on the first RSD in 2008. Fans have accused it of releasing overpriced singles in absurdly small numbers that encourage touts. Last year's event saw Paul Weller announce that he wouldn't take part again after a Lancashire shop sold his single *Brand New Toy* straight onto eBay instead of to customers. Labels themselves have also claimed RSD has become dominated by the majors, whose RSD output means the pressing plants don't have enough staff to press up regular indie releases. But there have been many releases to get excited about, with Pet Shop Boys' otherwise unavailable *Love Life* featuring their demo of a song written for Swedish band Alcazar, *Classic Pop*'s own cherished favourite. And if anyone wants to buy us one of official sponsors Rega's delightful-looking Record Store Day-branded turntables, they're more than welcome.



BJORK – COLOURED VINYL SERIES

With *Vulnicura* rush-released in January after leaking online and an accompanying exhibition at New York's MoMA, One Little Indian are reissuing Björk's previous seven albums on coloured vinyl. The catch: buyers won't know what colour the vinyl will be, with the teaser that each will "personify the album's character". Her first three albums are £19 each, with the others issued as double vinyl at £24. 2001's *Vespertine* is housed in a gatefold sleeve. Each album is limited to 5,000, after which they'll be revert back to regular black vinyl.



PAUL WELLER – SATURNS PATTERN

The Jam and The Style Council have had several luxurious reissues recently, so it seems right that Weller's first new album since 2012's *Sonik Kicks* is available as a deluxe box-set as well as regular black vinyl. The £40 box includes a coloured vinyl with exclusive artwork, the deluxe CD with three extra tracks, a DVD, a 20-page photo booklet and a 24"x24" poster. The DVD has a track-by-track interview, a documentary on the album, a behind-the-scenes photo shoot feature plus videos for *White Sky* and *Long Time.*



THE POP GROUP – CITIZEN ZOMBIE

Having reformed in 2010 after a 29-year gap, the jazz-influenced post-punkers now release their first album since 1980's *For How Much Longer Must We Tolerate Mass Murder?*, with highly-selective producer Paul Epworth presumably dropping his usual Adele/McCartney fees to helm the Bristolians' return. The album is out on 180gm heavyweight vinyl with a free poster, while the band's Pledge Music page includes handwritten lyric sheets for each song, signed by singer Mark Stewart, for £37 each. The band go out on another six-date tour in May.



DAVID BOWIE – CHANGES/KINGDOM COME

Every week seems to bring new Bowie vinyl, so it's no surprise that he's at the heart of RSD. First is a *Changes* picture disc with a B-side of *Eight Line Poem*, a previously-unreleased version taken from the ultra-rare pre-*Hunky Dory* deal-seeking promo album Bowie's management pressed in 1971. Also out for RSD is a split 7" single with Tom Verlaine, featuring the former Television singer's original version of *Kingdom Come* on one side and Bowie's cover from *Scary Monsters* on the other.



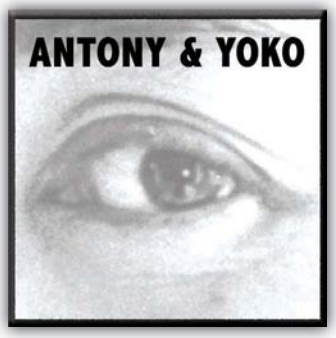
KATE BUSH – THE RED SHOES

New American reissue imprint Analog Spark gets off to a flyer by finally giving a vinyl reissue to Bush's *The Red Shoes*, unavailable on vinyl since 1993. Bush has long criticised the original album's digital mastering, eventually having it remastered in 2011 as part of *The Director's Cut*. Analog Spark's 180gm vinyl, competitively priced at $25 (£16.50), is taken from those 2011 remasters, overseen by Sterling Sound engineer Ryan Smith. Expect Analog Spark vinyl reissues of albums by Ben Folds Five, The Dave Brubeck Quartet and Laura Nyro.



EMPIRE OF THE SUN – WALKING ON A DREAM

One of the first officially confirmed releases for this year's Record Store Day is an overdue (clear) vinyl edition of Australian pop dreamers Empire Of The Sun's debut album, which coincides with the duo's unlikely involvement on the *Dumb And Dumber To* soundtrack. Non-singing half Nick Littlemore has been keeping busy by forming an equally unlikely band, White Shadows, with The Vines singer Craig Nicholls and Littlemore's programmer brother Sam Littlemore. Their debut single *Give Up Give Out Give In* is well worth a listen.



YOKO ONO – I LOVE YOU EARTH/BLINK

Coinciding with Ono's 82nd birthday comes a pair of 10" singles. Antony Hegarty collaborates on the three-song *I Love You Earth* single, including a new version of Ono's song *I'm Going Away Smiling*, with profits going to The Rainforest Trust. The other single, with avant garde saxophonist John Zorn, sees proceeds go to Zorn's non-profit New York venue The Space. It's a one-sided release featuring their improvised song *Blink*, recorded in 2012 for the 25th anniversary of New York radio station WNYC's arts show *Walking On Air*.



DEXYS MIDNIGHT RUNNERS – DON'T STAND ME DOWN

A flop on its release in 1985, *Don't Stand Me Down* may actually be Kevin Rowland's most complete album. Both a 1997 CD release on Creation and a 2002 'Director's Cut' version are long deleted, so Universal's decision to release it on (for reasons unknown) purple vinyl for RSD mean it can finally be cherished by any fans Dexys have picked up since 2012's *One Day I'm Going To Soar.* In other Dexys news, bassist Pete Williams releases his solo album *Roughnecks And Roustabouts* soon.

WIN! LOTS OF COOL STUFF

A FINE SPREAD OF GOODIES UP FOR GRABS IN THIS SPECIAL AWARDS ISSUE OF *CLASSIC POP* INCLUDING NEW RELEASES FROM LEVEL 42, DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES AND JAMES, PLUS TICKETS TO WYCHWOOD FESTIVAL, WATCHET FESTIVAL AND LEGENDS OF POP IN SCARBOROUGH. TO ENTER ONE OR ALL OF THEM, PAY A VISIT TO **WWW.CLASSICPOPMAG.COM** AND CLICK ON 'COMPETITIONS'...

2 x Wychwood Festival tickets

Wychwood Festival is set to light up Cheltenham Racecourse on May 29-31st, with a thrilling long weekend of various star performances ranging from established acts like UB40's Ali Campbell, Astro and Mickey Virtue Reunited, the Wonder Stuff and The Proclaimers, through to some talented fresh faces, Ghostpoet and Lucy Rose amongst them. Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Dreadzone also perform and DJ sets from Craig Charles and Andy Kershaw should fill the dancefloors. Music aside, there's plenty more going on including a line up of top-drawer comedians, a kid's literature festival and lots of workshops. Head over to www.wychwoodfestival.com for more info.

Q UB40 had a chart hit with:
• *Red Red Wine* • *Lady In Red* • *Roses Are Red*
Closing date: 30/04/2015





3 x Level 42 Something About You compilation albums

This new Level 42 compilation offers up a 17-strong setlist of the some of the band's finest moments from across their career including the classic Top 10 trio *Lessons In Love*, *Running In The Family* and *The Sun Goes Down (Living It Up)*. The kind folk over at Universal have donated three copies, and all are all up for grabs. Enter for a chance to witness Mark 'Thunderthumbs' King at his best!

Q Level 42's debut album is called:
• *True Colours* • *Sirens* • *Level 42*
Closing date: 21/05/2015



1 x James Super Deluxe box set

James' influential albums *Laid* and *Wah Wah* are to be reissued as an alluring 12"x12" Super Deluxe box set that includes 68 tracks spread across four CDs. Expect lots of unreleased material and intimate moments including rehearsals, out-takes, jams, B-sides, radio sessions and live cuts as well as a glossy 56-page hardback book that features rare photos and memorabilia. Four button badges and four postcards complete the package.

James scored a hit with:
• *Sit Down* • *Stand Up* • *Lie Down*
Closing date: 21/05/2015

6 x Daryl Hall & John Oates Live In Dublin CD/DVDs

Daryl Hall & John Oates' new set features their Dublin Olympia show where the prodigious duo ripped through a greatest hits set that reveals why they're true masters.

Daryl Hall & John Oates had a US No. 1 hit with:
• *So Close* • *Downtown Life* • *Maneater*
Closing date: 21/05/2015





4 x tickets to the Watchet Festival

Nine years on and the Watchet Festival is upping its game with three stages and over 50 live acts including The Boomtown Rats, The Blow Monkeys and Big Country.

The Boomtown Rats are fronted by:
• *Bob Geldof* • *Robert Smith* • *Midge Ure*
Closing date: 21/05/2015

2 X tickets to Legends Of Pop

Scarborough Open Air Theatre plays host to pop stalwarts Rick Astley, Sinitta, ABC, Go West, Five Star and Undercover for an all-day Eighties spectacular that's definitely one for the classic pop calendar. If the music isn't enough, the event is hosted by none other than Pat Sharp!



Rick Astley's middle name is:
• *John* • *Paul* • *Chris*
Closing date: 21/05/2015

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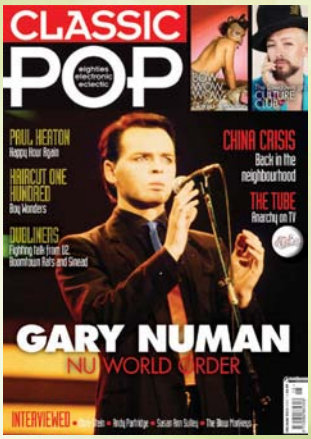
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REVIEWS

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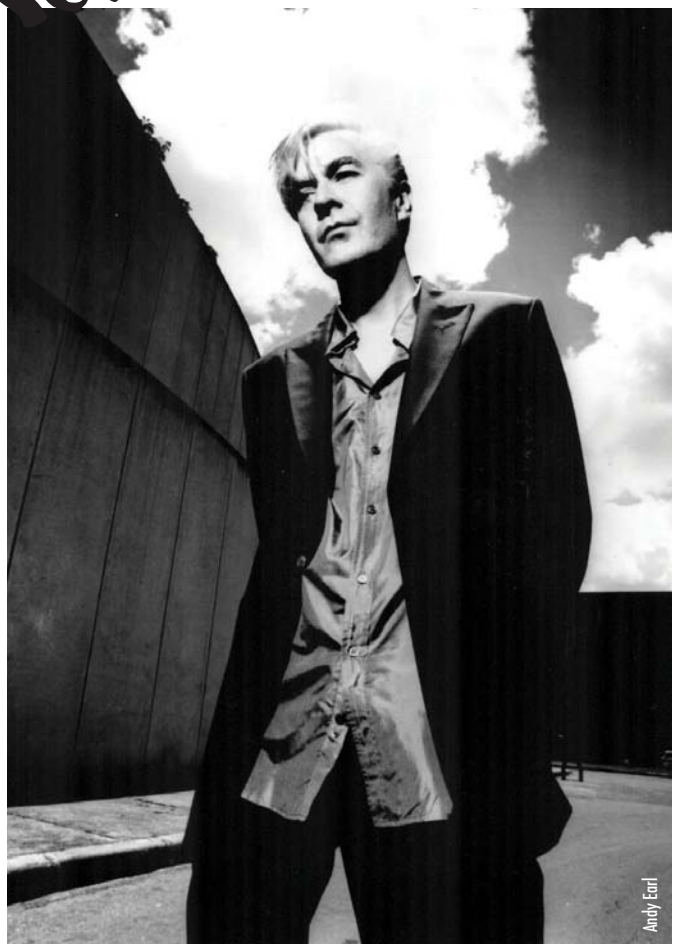
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RATINGS

✕✕✕✕✕	LOVE IT
✕✕✕✕	BUY IT
✕✕✕	STREAM IT
✕✕	PONDER IT
✕	AVOID IT

Prides play Heaven (review P111)



MARTIN FRY

THE EPITOME OF STYLE EVER SINCE ABC BURST OUT OF SHEFFIELD IN 1981, MARTIN FRY BRINGS A TYPICAL VERVE TO HIS VIEWS OF THE LATEST SINGLES. THEN IT'S BACK TO THE DAY JOB, AS ABC EMBARK ON AN ORCHESTRAL TOUR IN NOVEMBER… **John Earls**



MADONNA
LIVING FOR LOVE
"The Boss. Imperious. The Empress Of Pop returns like a way sexier Gaga. An anthem to defiance – 'After the heartache, I'm gonna carry on.' The MO of a classic pop tune, especially in these troubled times, is to elevate, to lift you up. Madonna carries us with her. Some great lyrics: 'I deserve the best and it's not you.' You do not want to get on the wrong side of Madonna. Tune."



RIHANNA FEATURING PAUL MCCARTNEY AND KANYE WEST
FOUR FIVE SECONDS
"The world's most expensive buskers, this millionaire trio serve up a minimal track – McCartney is criminally underused. Rihanna sings her heart out and, in the video, Kanye looks set to spontaneously combust. Somehow, all combine to make something special happen."



GIORGIO MORODER FEATURING KYLIE
RIGHT HERE RIGHT NOW
"Together in electric dreams… Moroder delivers a very tasteful EDM moment. The Britney-esque verse proves to be more exciting than the chorus, which is too squeaky. Kylie keeps it very Kylie indeed. Anodyne and vanilla."



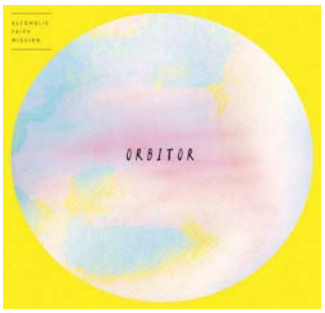
BLANCMANGE
PADDINGTON
"I'm guessing London W2, not the bear, as it's a celebration of Praed Street and all who live there. The spirit of '79 is alive and well. An enjoyably analogue and earthy track, with all the classic Blancmange components and a nice line in oblique lyrics – I'm looking forward to the *Semi Detached* album now."



FIFI RONG
NEXT PURSUIT
"There's an enjoyably homemade feel to this. I'd started to imagine that Fifi could be a guest vocalist on the next Massive Attack album, then I read in her biography afterwards that she's worked on Tricky's album *False Idols*. This is soothing, humane electronica with a spiky edge. Good job."



ERASURE
SACRED
"This would be a brilliant soundtrack to a spinning class. It's hampered by the vocal being a teeny-weeny bit too loud, resulting in a sound not unlike a man singing along to a radio in the next room. But Andy Bell is a pure voice in a pure digital landscape, and this is textbook Erasure. There are no surprises here. But why should there be?"



ALCOHOLIC FAITH MISSION
ORBITOR
"Arcade Fire and MGMT appear to have inspired these Danes' campfire song, which is delivered with a naïve gusto. They're a band weighed down by theory, as there's no discernible song or melody here. Instead, there's a chant that goes 'Am I good enough for you?' No. Not really."



JESSIE WARE
CHAMPAGNE KISSES
"A superb vocal delivery, Ware's voice is immaculate and restrained alongside some very grown-up electronica, making this track from her *Tough Love* album sound ultra ice-cool. It's wintery… but just on the edge of dull."



MARSHEAUX
A BROKEN FRAME

UNDO RECORDS

THEIR COUNTRYMATES MAY BE STRUGGLING WITH AUSTERITY, BUT ATHENS-BASED SYNTHPOP DUO MARSHEAUX HAVE DELIVERED AN ALBUM OF ORNATE, EXTRAVAGANT WEALTH…



If the title of Greek duo Marsheaux's fifth album looks familiar, you're not mistaken. Track by track, note for note, Marianthi Melitsi and Sophie Sarigiannidou have lovingly re-recorded Depeche Mode's second record. They're not the first to undertake such a project, of course: last year, for instance, The Flaming Lips released an awkwardly indulgent remake of the whole of *Sgt. Pepper's*. It's a trick few manage to pull off successfully, however, and it's even harder if the object of attention is a 'classic'.

Whether *A Broken Frame* is a true 'classic' is questionable. Nonetheless, it remains beloved of Depeche Mode fans for marking the moment when Vince Clarke left the band and Martin Gore started writing their songs. That 1982 album was characterised by an almost ingenuously simple approach, but while the Greeks have chosen to retain its oddly alien frigidity, they've also revealed its hidden depths. This is partially thanks to an additional welcome femininity, yet the most noticeable difference is the chrome-like veneer Marsheaux have added, making these sophisticated, re-energised imaginings glossier, darker and less – for want of a better word – squelchy.

Nowhere is that more true than on *Monument*: where the Mode's version tripped along in an oddly reggae style, Marsheaux's throbs and glistens, its bassline rolling its hips mischievously, not unlike early Nineties act Curve. That same rhythm lay at the heart of *Satellite*, too, but the version here is more sinister, its Massive Attack *Mezzanine* stylings perfect for a bleak, big budget sci-fi thriller. The Mode's close harmonies and stark military approach to *Shouldn't Have Done That* are meanwhile substituted by a slow-motion, mechanised sensuality, and though instrumental *Nothing To Fear* is given a playful rerub – its melody at times recalling Lipps Inc.'s *Funkytown* – *Leave In Silence* emerges as stately as anything Propaganda ever did.

All the same, these tracks remain recognisably Depeche-like, even sounding at times so convincing that they could be the product of the Mode themselves, had they made the album some 30 years later with guest vocalists. Cover versions these days are two a penny, but an entire album of rewarding interpretations is a genuine achievement. So if, as Gore himself once sang on *The Sun And The Rainfall*, "Things must change – we must rearrange them…" then this is the perfect response: dramatically confident songs of undying faith and overwhelming devotion.

Wyndham Wallace



MADONNA
REBEL HEART

BOY TOY RECORDS

XXX

SOMEWHERE AMIDST THE LENGTHY SPRAWL OF MADONNA'S MUCH-TOUTED RETURN IS A DECENT SHORTER ALBUM TRYING TO ESCAPE ITS ILL-FITTING EDM SURROUNDINGS…



Usually you can dismiss the bonus tracks on any Deluxe Edition, yet the five extra songs on Madonna's first album since 2012's *MDNA* highlight the problem she faces: two of *Rebel Heart*'s extra tunes are better than most of the 14 that comprise the regular edition. One of those is its title track, a gorgeous pop tune lighter than anything she's tackled since *Dear Jessie*. It should have been the lead-off single, not relegated to the final moment of an often flatulent 80-minute parade of behind-the-times EDM. Someone, somewhere, has no idea any more what Madonna is best at.

That person is almost certainly Madonna. *Rebel Heart* has been touted as her most autobiographical album, and it's undeniably her most self-referential: the Kanye West-produced *Holy Water* quotes *Vogue*'s chorus for no good reason, while *Veni Vedi Vici* does little more than namecheck old hits. It's obvious Madonna is after her crown again, and at moments she deserves it. But for all the big-name producers here, including Diplo, Kanye, Ryan Tedder and Avicii, it's comparatively unknown Ke$ha collaborator Billboard who crafts the standout *Ghosttown*, a sweeping ballad in the *Live To Tell* vein.

Madonna sounds most comfortable on the slowies, with the Tedder-produced *Hold Tight* another oasis of calm. *Joan Of Arc* is more anthemic and demonstrates a rare display of humour in its "I'm not Joan of Arc… not yet" chorus. That said, wailing "I'm only human" sounds like the Madgebot3000 doth protest too much.

It's when Madonna hits the dancefloor that *Rebel Heart* spirals badly out of control. The surefooted *Confessions Of A Dance Floor* feels a lifetime ago, with *Devil Pray, Unapologetic Bitch* and *Bitch I'm Madonna* all resembling Rihanna rejects. They're more like Vic Reeves' pervy knee-rubbing set to music than 21st century clubland, and the less said about *SEX*'s golden shower references the better. Not all the bangers are disastrous, however: despite *Viz* levels of innuendo, *Body Shop* is a lithe workout that shows Madonna really does admire her Superbowl collaborator MIA, while *Illuminati* is fascinatingly sinister dub.

Doubtless the main focus of *Rebel Heart* will be its headline-grabbing lyrics, but she should stop trying to copy trends and settle into the traditional pop that nowadays suits her best. More heart and less rebellion next time, thanks. **John Earls**

BJÖRK
VULNICURA

ONE LITTLE INDIAN





There's something remarkably intimate about hearing Björk, in that Icelandic-accented, birdsong voice, confiding on *History Of Touches* how "I wake you up in the middle of the night/To express my love for you". If that thought appeals, think again: *Vulnicura* is a bleak, complex break-up album about her relationship with artist Matthew Barney – which ended in 2013 – and each song is dated for its place in that process. *History Of Touches*' text relates a period "three months before", but by *Black Lake*, five months later, she's declaring, "I am one wound". Violently happy she is not.

Björk's been moving increasingly in this elaborately sophisticated direction for a while. In 2004 on *Medúlla* she was experimenting with an a cappella approach, and 2011's *Biophilia* wasn't exactly easily digestible. Fortunately, *Vulnicura* isn't as intimidating as her soundtrack to Barney's *Drawing Restraint 9*: on *Lionsong*, her voice traces a simple melody, an understated beat twitching beneath her vulnerable wails, while *Atom Dance* finds her voice hushed amid pizzicato strings, with Antony Hegarty's treated choirboy vocals like shattered, frosted glass.

Nonetheless, *Vulnicura*'s occasionally self-referential content insists upon careful attention. Wordy lyrical themes are investigated over different songs, and its melodies, too, are sometimes familiar: the opening moments of *History Of Touches*, for instance, recall 1993's *The Anchor Song*. But though much here is bewildering, bewitching and exotic, by the time *Quicksand* closes the record, Björk's almost approachable again.

Vulnicura is hardly easy listening in any sense. Sure, there's a 14-piece choir on *Mouth Mantra*, as well as strings arranged by Björk herself, but this is a stark and demanding collection of confrontational, confessional art, underlined by the presence of perfectionist programmer-producers The Haxan Cloak and Arca. Documenting her progress from a need to "synchronise our feelings" – on the forlorn but sophisticated *Stonemilker* – to her resolution to "step into the beam" amid the skittering, percussive *Quicksand*, *Vulnicura* is often draining, yet fulfilling for those prepared to immerse themselves in its depths. **WW**

MARC ALMOND
THE VELVET TRAIL

CHERRY RED





"It's weird to think that in two years' time I'll be 60 years old," Marc Almond revealed in a recent interview for *The Quietus*. "How did that ever happen?" In this light, it's perhaps not surprising his latest record overflows with worldly wisdom. Rather more surprising, though, is that he's made this record at all. Not long ago, Almond suggested he wouldn't write again, or not for public consumption. Frankly, given that he'd fallen into a coma in 2004 following an appalling motorcycle accident, it was remarkable he'd returned to the studio at all, even if the only album of original material he'd since released was 2010's *Varieté*. Fortunately, an unexpected email from songwriter/producer Chris Braide changed his mind. The three songs he proposed so inspired the singer that he'd penned their lyrics within days. Without meeting, they recorded an entire album remotely, and the results are a wonderful reminder of the national treasure Almond has become, his lyrics evocative and intimate, while Braide's music is seeped in a stately nostalgia.

In a typically theatrical fashion, the album is divided into three acts, with short instrumental overtures for each, and, inevitably, a grand finale. In between, Almond sweeps from the urgent glam-pop of *Bad To Me*, in which he recognises the hypnotic appeal of a bad relationship ("I know there's something in the dark back there"), to the torch song torment of *Scar*; from the grand gestures of *When The Comet Comes* (with Beth Ditto on flamboyant form) to the Jacques Brel chanson of *Life In My Own Way*, in which he celebrates a solitary life, declaring that, "I'd just like a nice cup of tea or a walk on the beach".

But Almond's daredevil nature cannot be suppressed, and on the stomping *Demon Lover* he beseeches his paramour to "take a step towards the edge", while *Minotaur* is a synth-swathed, innuendo-laden epic in which he faces down a partner with "growing horns". Best of all, however, are *Zipped Black Leather Jacket*, its title tailor-made for Almond's extravagant swoon and his droll, predatory instincts, and the title track's gorgeous yearning for a childhood in which "a few dirty old coins mean so much". We should value him with similar intensity as long as he'll allow. **WW**

THE LILAC TIME
NO SAD SONGS

COOKING VINYL



In 1999, Claire Worrall joined The Lilac Time for the less than positively titled *Looking For A Day In The Night* (described by *NME* as "so fey it'll have Belle & Sebastian fans converting to Fear Factory"). Back then, Duffy was singing wryly of how "Tomorrow I'll be dropped by BMG/ It doesn't bother me", and ultimately it didn't. In fact, he was already recording for Cooking Vinyl and writing for Barenaked Ladies, and soon, in collaboration with Robbie Williams, he'd taste more success than he'd ever dreamed of back in the Tin Tin days of *Kiss Me*, or as the original singer of Duran Duran.

Well over a decade later, Duffy has never sounded as fulfilled as he does now. The reason, one must assume, is that in 2008 Claire Worrall and Stephen Duffy were married. *No Sad Songs*, consequently, is exactly what its title suggests it will be: an album of optimism, its contentment wafting from its 10 tracks like the aroma of a good Sunday roast. *The First Song Of Spring* sets the tone, with Duffy's gently picked acoustic guitars, Claire Duffy née Worrall's strings, brother Nick Duffy's banjo, Melvin Duffy (no relation)'s pedal steel and a solitary kettledrum accompanying their leader as he asks tenderly "Have I told you that I love you today?" The heartfelt title track meanwhile



maintains this mood, as Duffy sings quietly of how "All I want is what you bring me", while the exquisite *Prussian Blue* tells of watching "a film of air/ Where each frame is hand-tinted Prussian blue".

Elsewhere, Duffy's proves he's lost none of his lyrical dexterity: amid the shuffling Mediterranean rhythms of *Babylon Revisited*, he references Eleanor Of Aquitaine and former Bank Of England governor Mervyn King. Furthermore, if anyone has ever yearned for the bittersweet melancholy of The Dream Academy's *Life In A Northern Town*, then they'll swoon for *She Writes A Symphony*, whose chorus mischievously recalls Laird-Clowes' masterpiece. In fact, all of *No Sad Songs* is suffused with a similar, bucolic serenity, and though some may still consider it a little fey, there's a mellow confidence that renders it all pleasantly substantial. Duffy suggests, on *Babylon Revisited*, that "They only dig you when you're dead", but one hopes he needn't wait that long. **WW**

JIMMY SOMERVILLE
HOMAGE

CHERRY RED



When Jimmy Somerville celebrated the 30th anniversary of Bronski Beat's *Smalltown Boy* last summer, he did so by sharing a version in which he was accompanied solely by pianist Nick Nasmyth. So thrillingly vulnerable was it that some no doubt hoped it was the direction he'd pursue for his next album. *Suddenly Last Summer*, however – a collection of cover versions released in 2009 – had already somewhat vainly headed that way. More recent EPs, meanwhile, focussed on electro-pop. Now, with *Homage*, Somerville heads even further away from spartan surroundings, straight for the discos of his youth.

Homage is, as its title suggests, a tribute. Initially it wasn't conceived as such, but producer John Winfield embraced the suggestion of tailoring it for Seventies dancefloors and its dozen songs were suitably, colourfully vamped up. It's important to note, however, that they weren't camped up. This is, after all, a sincere testimonial to the genre, delivered without any hint of a smirk, and Somerville clearly knows his way around it. The album is full of familiar tropes, lovingly arranged, from the sax solo that introduces *Bright Thing* and the glimpses of brass on *Freak* (both originally from 2010's *Bright Thing* EP, though the latter has been reworked significantly from its heavier, more sluggish version) to the



string flourishes and walking bass of recent single *Travesty*.

Where *Homage* falls short is in its lack of range. Sequenced like a vinyl album, each side offers five upbeat tunes followed by a more sombre track, but the club-friendly songs are pitched at the same tempo and blur into one another. Only *The Core*, with its chic wah-wah guitars and funkier rhythm, and *Learned To Talk*, whose MOR soul vibe is oddly appealing, stand out from the crowd. Elsewhere, Somerville sounds like he's having a blast, but his falsetto frequently seems overwhelmed. More worryingly, *Bring It Back* sounds almost indistinguishable from Moloko's own eulogy to disco, *Sing It Back*: its tempo, speed and key are the same, and the melody of its chorus isn't so different either. Still, one shouldn't begrudge Somerville the opportunity to indulge his passions. It's just a shame that those without such a strong devotion to disco may struggle to be quite so moved. **WW**

LOWELL
WE LOVED HER DEARLY

ARTS & CRAFTS



22 year old Elizabeth Lowell Boland's 2014 debut solo single was boldly called *I Killed Sara V.* "I reached to find a breath," she sang tenderly, "my fingertips along her chest… So long sweet Sara V." But who was this victim? In fact, for the years after Lowell dropped out of university, Sara Victoria was her stripper alias. On *We Loved Her Dearly*, Lowell continues to explore her past, confronting it, empowering herself, and rising far, far above it.

Lowell's first release was 2012's less than pithily-titled *Apparatjik Presents Lowell: if YOu_ _ caN, 5olve thi5 jumble?* Its seven tracks found her collaborating with Mew's Jonas Bjerre, Coldplay's Guy Berryman, a-Ha's Magne Furuholmen and award-winning producer Martin Terefe, who'd taken a shine to demos he'd been passed. He remains on board as producer here, but early attempts to pair her with other writers were rejected: Lowell is unquestionably her own woman, not least when it comes to relationships of any sort, something the defiantly upbeat *88* underlines: "I can be unfaithful/ But I like to tell you when I'm gonna stray".

So what you get is a fascinatingly diverse but unified mix of styles: *Words Were The Wars* lays bare the aching end of Lowell's emotional spectrum, her confidence developing as



the song reaches its crescendo, while on *Cloud 69* she breaks into the kind of dirty-synthed hip-tronica beloved of M.I.A. *88* sounds like Grimes let loose in her childhood nursery, closing tune *Time I Lower Me Down* recalls Björk, while *Palm Trees* is full of tropicalia-tinged yearning (as well as a terrific guitar riff halfway through). But though *LBGT* sounds like a sexually enlightened children's nursery rhyme, and *The Sun* could be a robotic Feist breaking down, it's *The Bells* that steals the show, its irresistible simplicity and lazily sexy, wide-eyed exuberance as feelgood as anything that will feel good in 2015.

Full of an unusually candid, emotional honesty, progressive sexual politics and explosive pop nous, *We Loved Her Dearly* is a record that demands a spotlight without ever endangering Lowell's dignity. This former private dancer might not do what you want her to do, but it's because she's got far better ideas. **WW**

JOHN CARPENTER
LOST THEMES

SACRED BONES



Film buffs and fans of electronic music will already know that John Carpenter is not only the writer and director of some of the finest sci-fi and horror movies of the late Seventies and Eighties – amongst them *Halloween, Escape From New York, Christine* – but that he was also responsible for most of their eerie soundtracks. Indeed, the minimalist score to 1976's *Assault On Precinct 13* is so beloved of Air that they reissued it on their Record Makers label in 2004, and listening to Carpenter's unexpected debut album proper, it's not too far-fetched to imagine that they'll love this one too.

Whether listeners will agree with Carpenter's own assessment that it's "all about having fun" is rather less likely: *Lost Themes* may be a little slicker – and more in tune with 21st century technology – than many of the soundtracks to the chilling films he made, but much of it still sounds as tense as they were. Combining – for the most part – simple, repetitive melodies and an occasional fondness for the kind of key changes beloved of Seventies progressive rock (especially on the lengthy *Obsidian*), these nine instrumentals are effectively, uncomfortably atmospheric, evidence that the 67 year-old hasn't lost his touch for uneasy listening. *Lost Themes* is therefore a genuine boon for those wishing to explore this unsung synth hero's continued creativity. **WW**

ALL WE ARE
ALL WE ARE

DOMINO



Those who heard All We Are's *Feel Safe* single last year would have been forgiven for wondering for a moment if The XX were back with their third album. Those who heard *Keep Me Alive* a few months later, furthermore, may have speculated that Wild Beasts could have recorded a duet with Bat For Lashes, or maybe even Sinéad O'Connor. In truth, though, the band shares a producer with Natasha Khan, and a label with Wild Beasts, while few have been repulsed by The XX, and there are hints too of last year's underrated Mr Twin Sister release here, mainly thanks to the similarly shiny surfaces and the naggingly insistent melodies.

Familiar though *All We Are* are, however, this is still a lovely way to pass three-quarters of an hour, largely because they find a small cubbyhole, somewhere between their comparable contemporaries, to snuggle up and call their own. On *Ebb And Flow*, for instance, the multicultural trio, all based in Liverpool, conjure up a bleak, almost gothic landscape before the spaces are sketched in with craftily picked guitar melodies. *Stone* and *I Wear You* are meanwhile full of glimpses of lithe, refined white funk. *Life Of Seven*, finally, sits morosely in a neon lit, smoky corner at dawn listening to The Blue Nile, something everyone should try at least once. **WW**

EAST INDIA YOUTH
CULTURE OF VOLUME

XL RECORDS



"The end result was not what was in mind," sings former Mercury Prize nominee William Doyle on the second track of his second album, and that, no doubt, is as true now as it was when he first left behind his old band, indie hopefuls Doyle & The Fourfathers. Turning his back on guitars in favour of an electronic approach, he stumbled on a sound that was both nostalgic and futuristic, commercial yet wilfully experimental. It's something he refines to tremendous effect here, and what makes it so exciting is precisely the sense that Doyle himself doesn't quite know where he's going.

While *Culture Of Volume* may start out with a churning wave of stuttering synths, by *End Result* Doyle is soaring heavenwards, leaving a vapour trail of sparkling keyboard melodies behind him. These celestial realms are revisited on the richly textured *Turn Away* and on *Carousel*, a moving, epic hymn with a slow-burning lift-off. Then there's the Pet Shop Boys pop of *Beam Away*, and the galloping, breathless *Hearts That Never* that, like *Entirety* – a frantically dirty floorpacker – will thrill Underworld fans. With Doyle's vocals sounding more confident than before, the end results may have been unforeseen, but those seeking grit in their machines will welcome this warmly. **WW**

SAY LOU LOU
LUCID DREAMING

COLUMBIA RECORDS



Two long years since their debut EP *Maybe You* was released on the hip Kitsuné label, *Lucid Dreaming* finally arrives to prove that a major label deal has done nothing to diminish duo Say Lou Lou's appeal. The ZTT grandiosity evident on that 2013 single remains intact throughout their first album, its surfaces slick, its contours smooth, its depth imposing. In addition, the glamour of its architects, Swedish/Australian twin sisters Miranda and Elektra Kilbey (daughters of The Church's Steve Kilbey, fact fans) remains reflected as successfully in the dreamy electropop of new songs like *Glitter* – sultry and glistening, with eccentric echoes of both Bowie's *Ashes To Ashes* and Mike + The Mechanics' *Silent Running* – as on 2013's showcase track, *Julian*, whose nocturnal ambience is slowly lit neon-golden as its rhythms expand. Their aesthetic is hardly unprecedented, but a collaboration with Lindstrom on *Games For Girls* provides added colour when it's most needed. *Skylights* also provides an impressively bombastic sense of drama, as though it's not only bringing their album to an end but accompanying the closing credits for an 'all's-well-that-ends-well' blockbuster. True, there's two of them, but if only Madonna was still this full of bravado. **WW**



SCARLET SOHO
IN COLD BLOOD

CADIZ MUSIC

There's an instrumental on Hampshire-based Scarlet Soho's third studio album called *2015*, and it's a useful reminder: *In Cold Blood* sounds like it could have been recorded in 1986. Originally arriving on the back of the electro-clash synthpop revival of the early 2000s, the duo have crafted a record that, for the most part, represents an eye-liner heavy, loving revival of the Depeche Mode sound circa *Black Celebration*, down to the distinctive warble in James Knight's voice. Their mood may be more chirpy, and there are hints, too, of Duran Duran's *Planet Earth* in the opening of *Gigolo* – and of Gary Numan's *Cars* in the resounding *Solo KO* – but it's the disciplined bounce of their rhythms and the thump of Scarlet's bass programming that dominate this nostalgic, warm-blooded voyage back in time. **WW**



A SOUNDTRACK BY THE THE
HYENA

CINEOLA

There's been increasing activity on the The The front recently: an extended *Soul Mining* reissue, the promise of a biography, and now the third of three soundtracks released since 2010. This opaque, hour-long instrumental score to younger brother Gerard Johnson's *Hyena* is unlikely to satisfy those seeking brooding, twisted examinations of the psyche, but its mood is complementary. *The Invisible City* and *Tiny Blue Sirens* are full of empty spaces and anxiety, *Blue Eyes* flutters over a dusky urban landscape, *Splayed* and *Death Nest* boast terrifying chainsaw atmospherics, and those missing Matt Johnson's voice can find brief comfort amid the sedate piano chords of *Everybody Wants To Go To Heaven*. It's a cinematic experience worthy of The The's reputation. **WW**



JENNIE ABRAHAMSON
GEMINI GEMINI

HOW SWEET THE SOUND

Stockholm's Jennie Abrahamson has had the words 'Kate Bush' tossed around in her presence a fair few times, and the magical, other-worldly eccentricity of opener *Snowstorm* will only encourage this. But elsewhere her pristine vocal is accompanied by more than *Snowstorm*'s solitary kalimba: there's the fierce, sleek *Wolf*, the African drums that drive *The War*, and the rich, electronic arrangements of *Saved*, with its rubbery bassline and chiming Band Aid bells. *Snowstorm*'s restraint isn't alone, however: *Phoenix* heads for torch song territory, while the piano setting of *Lake Geneva* recalls Ane Brun, in whose band Abrahamson has played (and who guests here as part of a choir). The songs don't linger with quite the same intensity as Brun's, but those cloud-busting comparisons fail to tell the whole story. **WW**



LONELY ROBOT
PLEASE COME HOME

INSIDE OUT

Conceived by It Bites' current frontman, John Mitchell – who replaced Francis Dunnery when the *Calling All The Heroes* heroes reformed in 2006 – Lonely Robot leans even more heavily on the rock that inspires his day job's musical direction, eschewing pop flavourings for meaty chunks of riffage. Fans of modern prog like Porcupine Tree will revel in the monstrous *God Vs Man* and the band's self-titled, eight-minute signature tune; Eighties buffs may be attracted by the presence of Go West's Peter Cox's appealingly husky vocals on the drum-heavy *The Boy In The Radio*, or Nik Kershaw's guitar work on *Humans Being*, or even Marillion's Steve Hogarth, who pops up on backing vocals and piano. Occasional voiceovers by actor Lee Ingleby further underline the serious-minded nature of Mitchell's hefty concept. **WW**

THE BLOW MONKEYS
IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

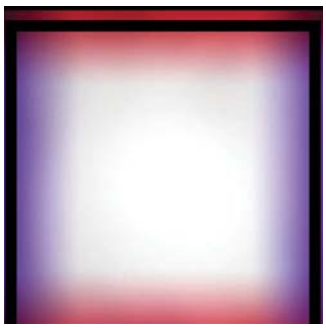
BLOW MONKEY MUSIC



In the run up to The Blow Monkeys' 10th album, frontman Dr Robert has been keen to point out this is the fourth they've made since their 2008 reunion, emphasising not just their productivity but the validity of their existence as a contemporary, working act that looks forward musically, rather than relying on their former incarnation as purveyors of sophisticated, soulful pop. Nonetheless, *If Not Now* still finds them revelling in the sounds of yesteryear. Those who've heard their 21st century albums will be less surprised, but the manner in which they rev up their engines on *OK! Have It Your Own Way* – which sounds as much like Showaddywaddy as anything – and *The Sound Of Your Laughter*, whose guitars could be Status Quo attempting to emulate Marc Bolan, may still be unexpected. Robert has stated that the album is born of his "absolute love of early rock and roll", yet the fact that *All That Glitters* is melodically reminiscent of The Bee Gee's *To Love Somebody*, and *Stay Now* is not unlike The Beatles' *Let It Be* with bonus saxophone, suggests he's pursuing it through some puzzling channels. With *Sun Is In The Sky* recalling Primal Scream's Rolling Stones' parodies, it might be time for some medicine, Doctor. **WW**

OOFJ
ACUTE FEAST

RING THE ALARM/ FAKE DIAMOND



Those for whom the new Björk album has proven a little too dark, and who hanker for slightly less troubled subject matter, will happily welcome LA-based duo OOFJ's second album. Distinguished by South African vocalist Katherine Mills-Rymer's breathy, Julee Cruise vocal stylings and Danish instrumentalist's Jenno Bjørnkjær's rich, sweeping, luxurious production, it regularly recalls the sublimely elegant desolation of *Vespertine*, not least on the dizzying orchestral arrangement for opener *Cherry*.

But there are shadows, too, of Goldfrapp's Felt Mountain on the brooding *I Forgive You* and the sultry *Snakehips*, while on the edgy *Cliffdive* and the climactic *You're Always Good*, Mills-Rymer proves herself able to reach the same top notes that Alison Goldfrapp has claimed as her own. That Mills-Rymer and Bjørnkjær first met while the latter was working on a score for Lars Von Trier's *Melancholia* is perfect: the film's unnerving sense of beauty and sorrow is reflected here, if, perhaps, with an additional measure of legendary French soundtrack composer Francis Lai for good measure. Toss in the desolation of the acoustic *Stephen Says* and the derelict ballroom glamour of *Totally* and you've got a memorably polished collection of sumptuous, haunting beauty. **WW**



PURITY RING
ANOTHER ETERNITY

4AD

There's something oddly robotic about Purity Ring. Perhaps it's Megan James' helium-infused, often auto-tuned voice, or Corin Roddick's whip-smart programming on *Heartsigh*, its trudging beat interrupted by rapid-fire snare bursts. Either way, *Another Eternity* sometimes lacks a human touch. Like The Knife or Future Brown, Purity Ring employ contemporary R&B techniques with avant-garde intent, and there's something menacing about the wall of synths in *Begin Again*, the pitch-shifted vocals of *Repetition*, and the piano-embellished *Bodyache*, where cut-up vocals stab a chorus atop a fiercely growling bass line. In fact, *Another Eternity* seems to occupy the same strange space into which Scarlett Johansson dragged her victims in *Under The Skin*: pristine, perplexing, beautiful and, honestly, quite scary. **WW**



MEGHAN TRAINOR
TITLE

EPIC RECORDS

In 1978, John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John took the world by storm in the big screen version of *Grease*. Nearly 40 years later, former country songwriter Meghan Trainor has taken a leaf out of their book, integrating doo-wop and early rock'n'roll into her aspirational hip-pop, especially on the globe-conquering *All About That Bass*. The rest of *Title* is further *Summer Nights* pleasure for the autotune generation, only suffering by being somewhat repetitious. Still, *Dear Future Husband* and *Walkashame* with its fun-loving swagger provide a knowing soundtrack for sassy, forward-looking female teenagers, and *Close Your Eyes* has a cartoon-like, Amy Winehouse appeal. Its charms may wear off in time, but for now, in small doses, *Title* is bass-ically entertaining. **WW**



8:58
8:58

ACP RECORDINGS

With the batteries on their torch-glasses finally out of power, Orbital called it a day late last year, but Paul Hartnoll's wasted no time: he's back with a new project, peppered with special guests and enough old school bangers – like the title track, with its gravelly spoken-word intro from baby-faced thesp Cillian Murphy – to keep fans loyal. A creepy, crawling version of The Cure's *A Forest* is draped with The Unthanks' outstanding harmonies, and it inspires Robert Smith to repay the compliment by sounding unusually jolly on the rave-friendly *Please*. Ed Harcourt sounds sexier than ever on *Villain*, while *Broken Up* echoes the melodic atmospherics of early Air, and the closing *Cemetery* has all the hallmarks of a euphoric Orbital classic. The brother's worked it out. **WW**



GAZ COOMBES
MATADOR

CAROLINE RECORDS

Gaz Coombes may be best remembered for his sideburns and that delightfully direct instruction in *Alright* – "Smoke a fag/ Put it out" – but Supergrass's work was always impressively mature, not least on the moody *Road To Rouen*. Coombes' second solo album maintains that cultivated aesthetic, its songs carefully honed as though he's spent the past 20 years refining every trick in the songwriter's handbook. He brings off an complex time change on the mammoth *Buffalo*, integrates nursery rhymes into *The English Ruse*, and strolls the streets of Oxford with his wife on the touching *Seven Walls*. The highlight, though, is the anthemic *Needle's Eye*, whose chorus explodes out of a melancholic verse to highlight the unremitting wonder of Coombes' voice. **WW**



SIMPLE MINDS
SPARKLE IN THE RAIN

UNIVERSAL MUSIC CATALOGUE

"FROM EXPERIMENTAL TO REVERENTIAL, FROM ART HOUSE TO STADIUM," THIS FIVE-DISC BOX SET – WITH LIVE, STUDIO, 5.1 AND 12" MIXES – PLOTS A TURNING POINT FOR SIMPLE MINDS…



It's 1982 and Simple Minds have crossed over from the underground to the alternative end of mainstream pop with their fifth album, *New Gold Dream*. It was a potent time: they didn't wait for that record to die down until they started on the next. So, during breaks on the *New Gold Dream* tour, they set to work in various studios writing and recording this, what would become their defining statement.

One of the first tracks to emerge was *Waterfront*. It's a duet of sorts: on one side, Derek Forbes' single, heartbeat-based bassline; on the other, the vocals and lyrics of Jim Kerr, audibly finding their own feet as he thinks out loud while wandering along the River Clyde. Legend has it that the band were so thrilled with what they'd come up with on *Waterfront* that they opened the last gig of the *New Gold Dream* tour with it, at Phoenix Park, and it went down a storm. They never looked back.

Kerr and Forbes – and of course guitarist Charlie Burchill – were all fundamental to the plot, but producer Steve Lillywhite can really be credited – for better or worse – for taking Simple Minds out of the new wave clubs and into the US arenas. The band also nod to Lou Reed with a cover of *Street Hassle* and guest vocals from Kirsty MacColl on *Speed Your Love To Me*, the album's second single.

The band may be a massive live force to this day, but *Sparkle In The Rain* is all about the studio. And so, as part of this five-disc box set, Disc 2 holds all the aces with the classic Extended Mix of *Waterfront*, the 12" versions of *Speed Your Love To Me* and *Up On The Catwalk* and the experimental *A Brass Band In Africa* and *A Brass Band In Africa Chimes*. Discs 3 and 4 deliver a live concert recorded at the Glasgow Barrowlands in February 1984 – worth a listen for the epic *Shake Off The Ghosts/Waterfront* introduction and the sprinkling of earlier songs with *Glittering Prize* and *New Gold Dream (81, 82, 83, 84)*. The fourth disc also squeezes a three-track September 1983 Radio 1 session on at the end, too. The fifth, DVD disc adds a 5.1 mix of the album, promo videos, *Top Of The Pops* and *Oxford Road Show* TV appearances.

This is a dense, detailed set – wrapped in artwork that extends, rather than just recreates the original – that measures how Simple Minds crossed the chasm from experimental to reverential, from art house to stadium.

Ian Peel

ORCHESTRAL MANOEUVRES IN THE DARK
JUNK CULTURE

UNIVERSAL



OMD's fifth album was less of a turning point and more of a completely fresh start. They'd fused their Kraftwerkian values with a pure pop disposition across the first three – *Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark*, *Organisation* and *Architecture & Morality* – only to rip up the formula completely, *Achtung Baby*-style, with *Dazzle Ships*. But unlike U2's switch from pomp to pop, OMD's audience left in droves. They were desperate to hang on to their mass market so the experimental streak was buried in favour a brass section (*Locomotion*), flowery shirts, a steel band (*All Wrapped Up*), sweet violin refrains (*La Femme Accident*'s prequel, *Talking Loud And Clear*), and the electro-disco of *Tesla Girls*.

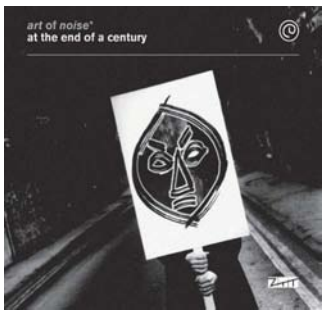
And it worked: OMD were got back on track, and this album is one of the reasons the band is still an active force today. Most of the B-sides and the remixes from the era have been reissued already so we thought the barrel was dry in terms of bonus material – but, as it turns out, what's been added here throws new light on the making of the album and of the group itself.



The original demo version of *Tesla Girls* is the missing link between pre- and post-*Dazzle Ships* OMD, showing not only where the hit single originally came from but also just how much production work was done to pull the group out of their old Gramophone Suite mindset and into something far more stadium.

The other unearthed treasure is the Paul Humphreys ballad *All Or Nothing*. His *Never Turn Away* on the original album was subdued to the point of being barely noticeable. But this piece feels, in terms of its vocals and attitude, very 2015 while musically coming across like a follow up to *Architecture & Morality*'s *The Beginning And The End*.

As a physical CD release this has been dogged by production problems. We'd waited years to hear *Never Turn Away*'s B-side *Wrappup* on CD only for it to get missed following a manufacturing error. Assuming that mistake gets fixed, then this is a four-star reissue. If not, then it has to be a two-star. So, for now, we'll give it three. **IP**



ART OF NOISE
AT THE END OF A CENTURY

UNION SQUARE MUSIC

Art of Noise's million-selling *In Visible Silence* was their commercial peak, but a critical peak came in 1999 when Paul Morley, Trevor Horn and Anne Dudley reconvened to continue the ideas from the group's 1996 remix album *The Drum And Bass Collection* and fuse them with Horn and Dudley's shared passion for Claude Debussy, as previously explored on their work with Marc Almond for *The Tenement Symphony*. Only two releases resulted from the project originally – *The Section of...* and *The Reduction Of Claude Debussy* – but as our own Ian Peel explains in the liner notes to this expansive anthology, it was a five-year adventure which took in video art, concerts and collaborations, all of which are included here. **RB**



BASIA
LONDON WARSAW NEW YORK

CHERRY POP

The second solo album by Basia – originally released in 1989 – lacks the adventure and energy of the Matt Bianco album that placed her in the limelight just a few years before. But by 1989 Matt Bianco, too, had lost their edge and both parties, who had once been at the vanguard of club music, were getting left behind. They could have been presaging acid jazz but instead were off into smooth jazz/smooth pop territory; there's nothing here that would sound out of place on a Johnny Hates Jazz album. The record did generate a mild hit in the US with second single *Cruising For Bruising*, and its third – a cover of Aretha Franklin's *Until You Come Back to Me (That's What I'm Gonna Do)* – is worth a listen. **RB**



BIG SOUND AUTHORITY
AN INWARD REVOLUTION

CHERRY RED

It's a testament to the power of live performance, the power of The Big Sound Authority – and to the death of music TV in the UK – that the very words Big Sound Authority immediately call to mind a live rendition of their first single, *This House*, one Saturday morning in the basement of No. 73. The downside is that the band never quite got off the starting blocks, despite *This House* and its three follow-up singles, but those 7" and a wealth of bonus material make for compelling listening. Curiously, the group started as a result of a magazine (Paul Weller using *Smash Hits* to search for backing singers) and another mag provides a highlight: *The Person I Want To Be*, originally released on a flexidisc for *Jamming!* **IP**



BELINDA CARLISLE
ACCESS ALL AREAS

EDSEL

It doesn't feel like a new edition of *Classic Pop* unless there's a new Belinda Carlisle reissue to review. There really has been a lot of them over the last 18 months. We would have parked this one, if not for two reasons: firstly, it seems to be the start of a new stream of rare concert films coming out on combined CD/DVD – the likes of which you used to see on late night ITV – so hopefully there's more to come; and secondly, and most importantly, this is a concert from Belinda's greatest era, *Runaway Horses*. So it starts with the title track and *Summer Rain*, and then delves back in midway for *La Luna*, *Vision Of You* and *Leave A Light On*. And what better playout music than the delicate *Shades Of Michaelangelo*? **RB**



EXPOSE
EXPOSURE

CHERRY POP

An album to file under 'great US dance pop of the late Eighties' – a shelf that might also contain the likes of Nu Shooz, Shannon, Taylor Dayne and Will To Power. If you were listening to US radio at the time, this was the soundtrack to 1987 as not one but seven singles were released from this, Exposé's debut. And four of them sold by the bucket: *Point Of No Return* (a US No. 5), *Come Go With Me* (also No. 5), *Let Me Be The One* (No. 7) and *Seasons Change* (the group's No. 1 hit). If you were in the UK in the late Eighties, it's more noteworthy for the production of Lewis Martineé (who went on to do *Domino Dancing* for the Pet Shop Boys) and the singles' UK-specific PWL remixes. **RB**



THE FARM
THE COMPLETE STUDIO RECORDINGS

DEMON

A seven-CD Farm box set sounds like overkill but there's a lot of merit here. The first disc of pre-fame, mid-Eighties material centres around BBC radio sessions; you can hear the seeds of *All Together Now* on the spiky *No Man's Land*. Discs 2, 3 and 4 are simply their three albums, *Spartacus, Love See No Colour* and *Hullabaloo*. The title of Disc 5 – *Non-Album Tracks + B Sides* – sounds more like the work of an accountant than a band known for their sharp wit; similarly the embarrassment of riches on Disc 6: *BBC Sessions*. But the reward is the final disc: six Terry Farley remixes taking in *Groovy Train* and most of the rest of *Spartacus*. **RB**



MARTIN HANNETT & STEVE HOPKINS
THE INVISIBLE GIRLS

FACTORY BENELUX

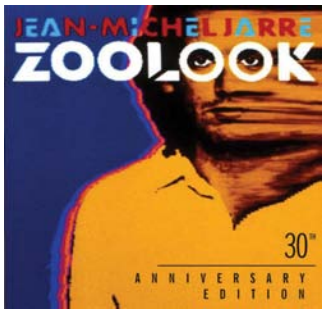
This new compilation explores the lesser-known works of part-control freak, part-visionary Martin Hannett under his Invisible Girls alias with Steve Hopkins. They made instrumentals – like the captivating *Scandinavian Wastes* and *Huddersfield Wastes* ; they did soundtracks, like 1976's *All Sorts Of Heroes*; and they produced for Factory and associated artists including Section 25, Pauline Murray and Crispy Ambulance. A Pauline Murray and the Invisible Girls retrospective is also released this month, with guest guitar from Vini Reilly. All of which makes the Factory Sample seem infinite, and everlasting. (If only...) **IP**



IMAGINATION
NIGHT DUBBING II

ISM RECORDINGS

This is not quite Imagination, and not quite the follow up to one of the greatest remix albums of all time. Cast your mind back to 1893: the dawn of the sampler, the rise of dub, the emergence of the 12" mix... all these factors conspired to produce *Night Dubbing*. We loved it, enough to give it a No. 9 chart placing and a gold disc. So it's a wonder that something so integral to the history of remix culture has never been revisited, until now. Sadly, this release proves why. It's not the full original group (it's "Imagination feat. Errol Kennedy") and the producers of its predecessor are replaced by various upstarts, meaning that – even when the tracks work – there's no cohesion. **RB**



JEAN MICHEL JARRE
ZOOLOOK

DISQUES DREYFUS

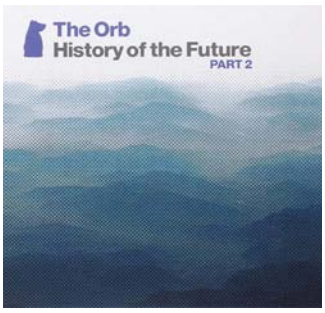
This 30th Anniversary edition of Jean Michel Jarre's greatest work – on a par with Grace Jones' *Slave To The Rhythm* with its multifarious, unlabelled editions and edits – is well worth tracking down. The good news here: the title track and *Zoolookologie* are as per the original 1984 album release, as opposed to the funkier Marcus Miller-infused single edits which replaced them last time. The bad news: they've used the 1997 edition edits of *Ethnicolor* and *Diva*, instead of the original album versions. Buy this anyway, because every track, no matter what mix it is, is about 100 times superior than anything else Jean Michel Jarre has ever released. **RB**



LEVEL 42
SOMETHING ABOUT YOU: THE COLLECTION

SPECTRUM

Another year, another Level 42 Best Of. For every new budget compilation that comes along, their greatest work – their album-by-album development – is covered in more and more layers of dust. The 17 tracks here are great, of course, but any one could compile a playlist as good, and come up with better artwork. Credit where credit's due, it has some good remixes: *Something About You* shines a light back on the Extended Version of *Leaving Me Now*, the Extended John Luongo/New York Remix of *The Chinese Way* and the Extended Version of *Turn It On*. But chances are you'll have all these already. **RB**



THE ORB
HISTORY OF THE FUTURE, PART 2

PARLOPHONE

There's something disappointing about the title: it was a future potentially so bright, but which never came to pass. This follow-up to last year's *Volume 1* – which focused on the major label era of big hits for little fluffy dance beats – brings the story up to date with a heavy dose of post-millennium tension as Thrash vanished off to pastures new and Dr Alex Paterson all but turned his back on ambient house in favour of heavy tranches of pre-glitch techno. The bad Badorb.com era is here, as are sessions for Kompakt and Malicious Damage and, most impressive of all, recording with Lee 'Scratch' Perry. **IP**



THE PRETENDERS
PRETENDERS BOX SET

EDSEL

Pretenders fans, prepare yourselves: this new box set takes in all eight of the group's albums for Warner from 1979 to 1999. Each is spread across two discs and many have DVDs added, filled with the results of a trawl through the BBC TV archives, from *TOTP* to *Swap Shop, Breakfast Time, Wogan, The Late Show, Pebble Mill, Songwriters Circle* and *Later*. The albums are available separately so, if all this feels like a Pretender OD, opt for either their self-titled debut or *Learning To Crawl* (with both *Back On The Chain Gang* and *2000 Miles*). Or possibly *Get Close*, for Lily Allen's favourite track, *Don't Get Me Wrong*, and its *Avengers*-inspired video. **RB**



THE PRIMITIVES
GALORE

CHERRY RED

Why weren't The Primitives as big as Blondie? They had the looks and the songs but they were probably just too homespun, English and indie for world domination, while Ian Broudie's production is wonderful and endearing, but hardly transatlantic. *Galore* was their third and last album until they came back with two reunion sets: *Echoes And Rhymes* (2012) and *Spin-O-Rama* (2014). *Galore* fell through the cracks on release, though, as the band weren't part of the Manchester scene. Ten live tracks are the highlights of the bonus material here, plus a couple of rare remixes: the September Mix and the previously promo-only Re-Ravishing Mix of *You Are The Way*. **RB**



THE SOUND
1980-1983

EDSEL

If The Sound have not been on your radar thus far, then this – the first of two new, dense CD box sets by the group – will right a few wrongs. This one compiles the time they spent with Korova Records – the Bill Drummond-steered Warner Bros. imprint more famous for launching Echo & The Bunnymen and Strawberry Switchblade. Three albums are included: 1980's *Jeopardy*, 1981's *From The Lion's Mouth* and 1982's *All Fall Down*. A fourth disc takes in a complete BBC *In Concert* recording of a set that bears more than a few hallmarks of classic Bunnymen, Cure and Psychedelic Furs. Fans of these and Bauhaus and The Teardrop Explodes would do well to investigate. **RB**



THE SOUND
1984-1987

EDSEL

More from The Sound, this time five discs focussing on *Shock Of Daylight* (1984) and *Head And Hearts* (1985). Musically, it's the story of a band on the outside trying to get in; with the hyper-speed development of pop genres at the time, it was less a case of trying to keep up, more of being with the vanguard one moment and out of step the next. The Sound quickly went from having a lot in common with the ultra new wave of Department S to sitting alongside the bloat of Simple Minds the next. But there's an urgency and an energy here that neither of those groups managed to sustain (or, often, display), all of which makes an afternoon with this box set an exciting prospect. **RB**



THE SPECIALS
SPECIALS

2 TONE/WARNERS

By the time of the release of the second Specials album, the group had reached No. 1 with a live single (*Too Much Too Young*), and had trailed a new, more confident direction with the release of one of the key tracks on this set: *Stereotypes*. Hardly 'just' a ska album, with this one Dammers and co. took in all manner of influences including lounge, dark exotica, bossa nova, northern soul and calypso. And it works! Not only on the Top 10 single *Do Nothing* but on the bonus content which, here, includes an Extended Version of *Why?*, *Stereotypes Pts. 1 & 2* from a John Peel session, and *You're Wondering Now* from a Kid Jensen session (those Kid Jensen sessions really are a treasure trove). **RB**



THE SPECIALS
MORE SPECIALS

2 TONE/WARNERS

This is the first of three very special Specials reissues released this month, all resplendent in terms of bonus tracks. Apparently the label has "liaised with" Jerry Dammers; what that amounts to is anyone's guess, but what a powerful punch he brought to the scene with this first Specials album. It wasn't just about the music, the artwork, the label... it became instantly iconic. *(Dawning of A) New Era* sums it up perfectly, but other songs like *Stupid Marriage, Doesn't Make It Alright* and of course *Too Much Too Young* also prove that, as songwriters, the group were ready with social commentary the likes of which no one else was saying (or singing). **RB**



THE SPECIAL AKA
IN THE STUDIO

2 TONE/WARNERS

In The Studio is the overlooked classic of The Specials' canon, so it's good to see it properly restored alongside its more well-known counterparts. This is the record that – post-*Ghost Town*, post-Fun Boy Three split – spawned both *Free Nelson Mandela* and a song that Elvis Costello would make his own: *What I Like Most About You Is Your Girlfriend*. Terry Hall had gone by this time so special guests are featured on the bonus tracks, like *The Boiler* (by Rhoda and The Special AKA) and *Jungle Music* (Rico and The Special AKA), and there's more bonus content here in the form of instrumentals. Six in total, ending – of course – on *Free Nelson Mandela*. **RB**



TEXAS
TEXAS 25

PIAS

It's been 15 years since Texas released their Greatest Hits. It debuted at No. 1 and went six-times platinum, so this new 25th anniversary compilation has a lot to live up to – but they have found a different way to look back. *Texas 25* sees the band decamp to New York and Nashville to work with Truth & Soul (Adele, Amy Winehouse), generating four new songs and also reworking tracks like *Black Eyed Boy* and *Say What You Want*, literally bringing them back to life, placing them at the doorstep of the likes of Al Green or Smokey Robinson, which is where they were always destined. *I Don't Want A Lover*, though, should never be touched. **IP**



THRASHING DOVES
BEDROCK VICE

CHERRY RED

With the likes of Jimmy Iovine (Simple Minds), Bruce Lampcov (Stephen Duffy) and Bob Clearmountain (Tears For Fears) at the controls, this album was always going to be on the art-pop side of indie. And, surprisingly for one released 27 years ago, to critical acclaim, and which spawned five singles (*Beautiful Imbalance* being the standout), it's never been reissued. Six bonus tracks in total: head for the Street Groove Remix of *JeSuS On The Payroll* a/k/a *For Gospel Or For Gold*, which did for Thrashing Doves what *La Passionara* did for the Blow Monkeys: took their music to a completely different, Balearic dancefloor audience, giving it a separate, infinite longevity in the process. **RB**

SO80S, VOLUME 9
VARIOUS
SOUNDCOLOURS



German DJ duo Blank and Jones continue to venture into the vaults and scoop up Eighties 12" mixes by the armful. There are 30 on this collection in total, but curated very much by their age as opposed to any musical cohesion. Can Afrika Bambaataa & Soulsonic Force's *Planet Rock* really be sitting – after all these years – on the same compilation as Joe Cocker's *You Can Leave Your Hat On*?

The DJs have already released a round-up of Ultravox 12" mixes back in 2011 but they have since managed to dig up a Francois Kevorkian/John 'Tokes' Potoker Club Version of *One Small Day*, originally released on the B-side of the US 12" of *Dancing With Tears In My Eyes* – though the sample overdrive of the Extended Mix from the original *Lament* cassette edition still takes some beating, I would say.

There are some seriously smooth downtempo 12"s included here – the Extended Version of Latin Quarter's *Radio Africa* and the Dance Mix of Debbie Harry's *French Kissin' In The USA* , for instance – as well as some seriously large chunks of electro: Paul Hardcastle's *19* (The Final Story) and Duran Duran's *All She Wants Is* (US Master Dub) and New Order's *Touched By The Hand Of Dub* all being undoubted highlights. But it's the Euro I struggle with. Saada Bonaire, oh yes! Spagna, oh no! **RB**



ALL THIS AND WORLD WAR II
VARIOUS
CULTURE FACTORY

A double album from the depths of the Seventies, *All This And World War II* has spent years languishing out of print, and while this "strictly limited edition audiophile recording vinyl replica edition" isn't destined to take it back to the mass market, it will give a fresh new airing to some curious cover versions. A film soundtrack, the original concept was simple: stars of the day recording Beatles songs, to be played over archive footage of World War II. There are some interesting results: Peter Gabriel's mythical take on *Strawberry Fields Forever* is here, as is Bryan Ferry's *She's Leaving Home*, and Tina Turner wrestling with *Come Together*. Just don't play the Leo Sayer tracks. **IP**



BRIT AWARDS 2015
VARIOUS
RHINO

If you watched this year's Brit Awards on TV, you might have been forgiven for thinking that – in the absence of some truly great live performers – they'd gone out and rounded up the best of the London Underground's buskers. They're all here on this compilation: Ed Sheeran, George Ezra, Paolo Nutini. Thankfully there are some big tracks and more colourful artists to even the balance: cue Iggy Azalea (collabs with both Ariana Grande and Charli XCX) and Sia's *Chandelier*, Clean Bandit's *Rather Be*, and possibly Paloma Faith's first great track, *Changing* with Sigma. What happened to Lily Allen's M.I.A. 'non-cover' *Air Balloon*? It landed here – though it's far eclipsed by FKA Twigs and the hushed, infectious *Video Girl*. **RB**



THE BEST OF CERRONE PRODUCTIONS
VARIOUS
BECAUSE

I don't know about you, but I'm beginning to feel pretty tired of the relentless Chic and Nile Rodgers PR machine. Giorgio Moroder's getting close, too. We all love an icon, but part of being iconic is a sense of mystery, mystique and the need to go off on musical adventures to find their best work. Very much in the latter camp remains Cerrone. A grand master of disco and a founding father of French dance – without him Daft Punk would probably not exist – all of his key tracks are here, both solo and for artists like Kongas, Revelacion and Don Ray. Standouts are, of course, the edgy *Love In C Minor* and the high synth drama of *Supernature*. **IP**



FIFTY SHADES OF GREY
VARIOUS
UNIVERSAL

While not her best work, Ellie Goulding's *Love Me Like You Do* is a strong single that feels like either a crushing blow or an uplifting lifeline, depending on your mood. It's one of the star turns here, on an album that includes Annie Lennox's gothic vamp of *I Put A Spell On You* – accomplished, though almost immediately outclassed by a modern-day equivalent in the form of *Earned It* by The Weeknd. Full marks to AWOLNATION too, not for his music but for shining a light on one of Bruce Springsteen's best subtle pop moments, *I'm On Fire*. It's left to Sia to deliver the killer blow, *Salted Wound*, a twisted, twirling mass of emotions and desire… all the things the film it soundtracks is not. **RB**



THE MIKE MAURRO PEAK-HOUR REMIXES
MIKE MAURRO
DEMON

How did Brooklyn DJ Mike Maurro get his hands on so many archive multi-track tapes? The result is 21 brand new remixes of urban classics, all based on original samples. A version of Imagination's *Burnin' Up* is tinged with modern house beats, and Ashford & Simpson's *Tried Tested & Found True* makes the past sound like the future. A 10-minute take on Evelyn 'Champagne' King's *Shame* keeps modern beats on the down low, while the near 14-minute remix of Harold Melvin & Blue Notes' *Bad Luck* has what feels like the euphoria of a live edition of *Soul Train*. **RB**



THE VALUE OF ENTERTAINMENT
VARIOUS
SALVO

Classic Pop editor Ian Peel's journey through the vaults of Trevor Horn and ZTT brings forth a new, double-CD edition of the label's pivotal 1985 compilation, *Sampled*. There's no *Relax* or *Pleasuredome* (though '*Two Tribes*-lite' *Disneyland* is a fair stand in). Instead, the label concentrates on the Euro talent it was developing: Paris' Anne Pigalle, Düsseldorf's Propaganda, London's Andrew Poppy... and Planet Funk's Instinct. Bonus tracks, plus *The Value Of Entertainment* on DVD: part-commentary on the '85 pop landscape and part-documentary of ZTT's series of concerts and improvisations that put the best of these records on the West End stage. **RB**

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BJÖRK: ARCHIVES
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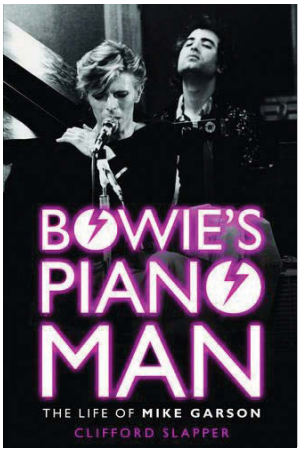
THAMES & HUDSON (BOOK)



Björk might have moved into apps with *Biophilia* in 2011 but she hasn't completely left old media behind. Compiled to coincide with her spring exhibition at MoMA in New York, this gathers four booklets, a paperback and a poster into a handy slipcase and examines her career from a variety of perspectives (the recent, rush-released *Vulnicura* is not included in the "psychographic journey" penned by Icelandic poet Sjón). Aficionados will relish the occasionally pretentious but incredibly well-researched essays by MoMA curator Klaus Biesenbach, music journalist Alex Ross and musicologist Nicola Dibben, detailing the collaborators Björk shepherds around like a matriarch or girl-mother, while the singer's email exchanges with academic and author Timothy Morton are revealing and entertaining. Björk has transcended her myriad influences – Mahler, Stockhausen, Kate Bush – while retaining a childlike playfulness. *Archives* helps gain a closer understanding of the most enigmatic artist of the last three decades. **Pierre Perrone**

BOWIE'S PIANO MAN: THE LIFE OF MIKE GARSON
CLIFFORD SLAPPER

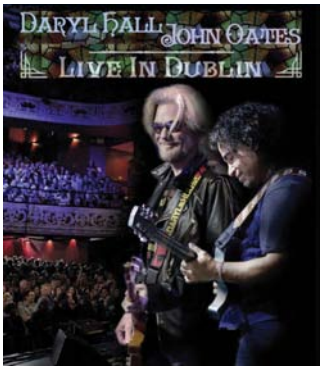
FANTOM PUBLISHING (BOOK)



For all the talk about Mick Ronson and Tony Visconti, the New York-born pianist Mike Garson has been the most constant Bowie collaborator of them all. His avant-garde solo on the title track of *Aladdin Sane* introduced a dissonant dimension, further developed with his rippling overlay on the anthemic *Time* and the sublime *Lady Grinning Soul*, and his input carried on into *Diamond Dogs* and far beyond. Since Bowie only contributes a few effusive tributes, the book majors on the reminiscences of Garson and his various bandmates, including the odd stage or backstage prank for light relief. This wonderful addition to the Bowie bibliography should be read while listening to *The Bowie Variations*, Garson's 2011 collection of jazz-meets-classical piano interpretations. A class book for a class act. **PP**

DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES
LIVE IN DUBLIN

OMNIBUS PRESS (DVD)



As John Oates admits in the bonus interviews included alongside the 15 classic songs he and Daryl Hall perform in this superlative release – available on DVD, Blue Ray and DVD + 2CD set – despite being the most successful pop duo of the Seventies and Eighties, they never appeared together in Dublin. Call it the luck of the Irish, but Hall & Oates certainly made up for lost time when they captured what they rightly call "an amazing, magical night" in the Olympia last July. Starting off with *Maneater* and *Out Of Touch*, the duo are backed by a crack band featuring sax player Charles DeChant, who decorates the irresistible *I Can't Go For That (No Can Do)*, and backing vocalist and percussionist Porter Carroll Jr of Atlantic Starr fame. The set majors on their blue-eyed soul material, including pillow talk ballad *Las Vegas Turnaround (The Stewardess Song)*, *She's Gone* and *Sara Smile*, three cuts from *Bigger Than Both Of Us – Back Together Again*, *Rich Girl* and the dreamy *Do What You Want, Be What You Are* – while live versions of *You Make My Dreams* and *Kiss On My List* are as exquisite as the originals on 1980's *Voices*. The only caveat might be the absence of the floaty *One On One*, but this package tops all their previous live releases. **PP**

HOWARD JONES
ENGAGE

D-TOX RECORDS (DVD + CD)



Three decades ago, when Howard Jones burst on the scene with the insanely catchy *New Song* and *What Is Love?* and became one of the leading lights of synthpop, he was already pushing the edge of performance performing with paint-covered mime artist Jed Hoile. Therefore *Engage*, an interactive multi-media CD/DVD project, is not a radical departure but simply the latest link in a long chain that has enabled this Renaissance man to explore his creativity thanks to evolutions in technology.

Fans who were at London's Marquee club in 1983 – as I was – will enjoy the references to the performer's early days in the ballet sequence which accompanies *Sister Brother* and the multiple hands of the playful neo-classical piece *5 Pianos*, while the infectious *Joy* and the haunting *Hold On To Your Heart* prove Jones hasn't lost his knack for writing a memorable tune and delivering a moving lyric. He may be operating at the cutting edge of technology as he sings *The Human Touch*, but a human dimension remains central to his work. The graphics and visuals do lapse into the occasional cliché, but there is plenty of food for thought in the Einstein and Kierkegaard quotes flashing up on the screen. Available in options including Stereo 2.0, DTS 5.1 and Surround 5.1, this engaging project works as a standalone listen as much as an immersive experience. **PP**

KILILIVE.COM PRESENTS









DURAN DURAN
WAR CHILD'S BACK TO THE BARS, WILTON'S MUSIC HALL, LONDON

19 FEBRUARY

BUILDING ANTICIPATION FOR THEIR UPCOMING MARK RONSON AND NILE RODGERS–PRODUCED ALBUM, DURAN DURAN PLAY A ONE-OFF SHOW FOR THE CHILDREN'S CHARITY

It's five years on from their last album, the unfairly overlooked *All You Need Is Now*, but the last time we saw any sign of Duran Duran live was when they limply headlined Hyde Park. At this, their smallest British gig since 1980 to just 300 fans, they could easily have done a set of rarities for hardcore Durannies. The stage has been expanded to allow Simon Le Bon, John Taylor and this week's guitarist Dom Brown to loom closer into the crowd, with Nick Rhodes lurking like Bela Lugosi over the keyboards. Poor Roger Taylor is largely invisible, stuck behind his namesake's massive hat.

Starting with the title track of *All You Need Is Now* suggests a hardcore fans' set is likely. John Taylor peacocks across the stage giving his best bassface, causing Le Bon to rebuke him: "John told me 'Let's keep it casual, there's no need to try hard tonight.' But look at him!'"

In this intimate theatre, Le Bon's banter – all cheesy puns and outrageous winks – may be to disguise his nerves. He struggles with his vocal monitor throughout the two-hour show, and at times rivals Ian Brown for off-key honking. *Come Undone* (or "Cum on Dom" as he dedicates it with a Benny Hill leer at the guitarist) sounds like a whackjob *X Factor* hopeful.

Yet tonight anything can be forgiven. After *All You Need Is Now*, the show is hits. Virtually two hours of them – every track is a single, and if that includes their eternally point-missing cover of *White Lines*, so be it. Of the huge hits, only *Planet Earth* doesn't get an airing. Le Bon may be hamming it up but he gives the show everything, performing *Hungry Like The Wolf*, a demented *Union Of The Snake* and a terrace-chant *Wild Boys* as if they were new songs.

Sure, there are a few uncharting recent singles in there, but *Sunrise* and *Girl Panic* should have been hits, so that's fair enough. So too should 1981's *Careless Memories*, which bristles with the band's punkier side when they tear through it with a speedy, sparky edge. After a mash-up of *Girls On Film* and *Psycho Killer*, Le Bon yells Duran are "the band to make you paaaarty!" Over 35 years on, they can get any crowd dancing. If that new album has the same up-for-it spirit as this paaaarty, it may well be the comeback of the year. **John Earls**

KRAFTWERK
NEUE NATIONALGALERIE, BERLIN

7 JANUARY

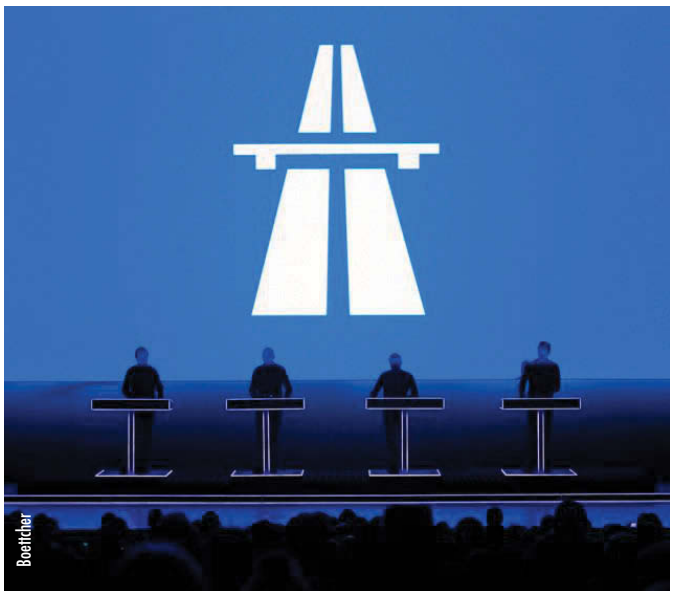
So what exactly are Kraftwerk these days? For the past couple of years they've been performing like a travelling exhibition at art galleries like New York's MoMA, London's Tate Modern, and now Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie. They are, therefore, cultural – and historical – icons, and yet they remain innovative and relevant, a regular touchstone for musicians of all persuasion. After all, 45 years after they were first assembled by Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider – though these days only Hütter remains from their iconic line-ups – Kraftwerk continue to rework and remix their own material, like technicians replacing worn out parts. They're clearly not ready to be hidden behind glass just yet.

Tonight – the second of eight gigs, with each initially focussing on a different album – the spotlight falls on *Radio-Activity*. Released an extraordinary 40 years ago, its morose, melancholic reflection of the paranoia associated with nuclear weaponry and power ensures that early whoops from the crowd are provoked by familiarity rather than the avant-garde nature of the music that comprises it. Still, although *Radioactivity*, *Radioland* and *Ohm Sweet Ohm* are hardly floorfillers, they're given extra bandwidth in these 21st century incarnations, so much that Fritz Hilpert breaks ranks to nod along and tap his foot next to his static companions.

Greater levels of enthusiasm are measured when, later, they start rolling out the hits in a crowd-pleasing fashion: *Autobahn* is reduced to a short but picturesque Sunday drive, while *The Model* still sounds like one of the greatest – yet simplest – synthpop songs ever to be written. Behind them there's a barrage of 3D imagery that holds true to the sometimes crude computer graphics that accompanied the songs' original release: *Autobahn* is paired with a Pixar-like animation of the legendary album cover, and at other times we're assaulted by flying saucers, musical notation, and express trains that float out across the auditorium.

By the time they finish, after rolling out mechanised mannequins for *The Robots*, then climaxing with a double volley of beefed-up versions of *Techno Pop* and *Musique Non Stop*, what Kraftwerk are still remains ambiguous. It's not, however, especially important. They are, crucially, a timeless enigma: a snapshot of the past's vision of the future, yet somehow still contemporary.

Wyndham Wallace



PRIDES
HEAVEN, LONDON

12 FEBRUARY

With only an EP and a few singles under their belts, Glasgow synthpop trio Prides have already established themselves as a fun, formidable force, ascending to Heaven for their biggest headline show to date. Making their grand entrance to the sound of *Prince Ali* from Disney's *Aladdin*, the band come out all guns blazing with *Cold Blooded* and *The Seeds You Sow* from last year's EP, plus new single *Higher Love*. Prides already sound fantastic on record, but live they're another level altogether, *The Seeds You Sow* in particular sounding huge.

"How the f*** are you doing, London?" shouts singer Stewart Brock, not for the first time tonight, before giving the audience a taste of their upcoming album with some new songs. *Let It Go* is a particular highlight, a phones-aloft festival anthem in waiting that shows a mellower side. Brock and guitarist Callum Wiseman show an entertaining chemistry throughout, with Wiseman mocking Brock's choice of drink – an elegant glass of red wine as opposed to the standard-issue band lager.

After returning to familiar ground with old single *I Should Know You Better*, Prides bring out their special guest, singer-songwriter Lauren Aquilina, to duet on *Strong Enough* before closing their main set with *Out Of The Blue* complete with appropriate blue lighting and clouds of blue confetti fired out into the crowd.

The break before the encore is filled with crowd chants of "Say you'll be my messiah", in anticipation of the band's breakout hit *Messiah*, but instead the encore starts with a pleasant surprise - a mixture of covers including tracks from Taylor Swift, Jessie Ware and Sam Smith. While Prides are known for their enjoyment of playing others' songs, it's a brave decision to perform eight whole minutes of them at your own gig, but it's something they pull off with great success, each track seamlessly blending into the next.

After thanking everyone who came down, all that's left is the inevitable finale of *Messiah* as Heaven's heavens open, covering the room in balloons and confetti. As the final chorus chants are sung and the outro of Aladdin's *A Whole New World* plays out, fans stay behind to pop the balloons like an aural fireworks display.

With such consistent live performances under their belts before even releasing an album, Prides are a band years ahead of the competition and an act everyone should be excited for in 2015.

Barney Hunter





PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING
NATIONAL SPACE CENTRE, LEICESTER

27 FEBRUARY



WHAT BETTER VENUE FOR THE SCI-FI OBSESSED DUO TO LAUNCH THEIR ALBUM *THE RACE FOR SPACE* – AND ON THE VERY DAY THAT WE BADE FAREWELL TO LEONARD NIMOY…

Since 2009 Public Service Broadcasting have been crafting intelligent and compelling pop music assisted by spectacular live shows, and this two-night residency at the National Space Centre is planned to dovetail with the launch of the duo's interstellar exploration-themed album *The Race For Space*. *Sputnik* is a storming opener, illustrating how much the pair have developed musically with its propulsive beats and hypnotic percussion, and other offerings from the new album – including *EVA* and *The Other Side* – feature electronic and acoustic sounds and demonstrate J Willgoose Esq's accomplished versatility.

Although the show is intended to highlight the album we are also rewarded with plenty of older material including the infectious *Night Mail*, the signature anthem *Theme From PSB,* and a ragged rendition of the perennial show-stopper *Signal 30*. For this tour PSB has also been expanded to a four-piece, providing Wrigglesworth with the opportunity to temporarily abandon his post as a powerhouse drummer and demonstrate his talents behind a bank of synths. An ability to shift between styles and genres is crucial to PSB's appeal, and in many ways they're a fascinating collision of contradictions: thoughtful but playful, ambitious but unpretentious, experimental yet always accessible.

Gigs in unusual venues can sometimes feel restrained and, despite PSB's immense live power, the crowd are fairly subdued. However, this is likely the result of a desire to absorb everything that is happening, and with the show enhanced by the atmospheric deployment of lights, films, images and sound clips to create a rich multi-media experience, there's a lot to take in. The mighty *Gagarin* marauds the senses, and closer *Everest* concludes the night's bold adventures in sound and vision. Once again, PSB succeed in pushing the boundaries of music and the tour will certainly cement their reputation as one of the most consistently thrilling live acts around. This is pop music… but not as we know it. **Miles Picard**

JESSIE J
O2 ACADEMY, BIRMINGHAM

27 JANUARY

It's been18 months since her previous tour was in the arenas and Jessie J is back, stripped of the high-end barn-venue production to perform in front of a 3,000-strong capacity crowd. It would be easy to say that it's something of a comedown for the feisty singer, whose second album, 2013's *Alive*, received mixed reviews and only spent 16 weeks in the charts, compared to her *Who You Are* debut's 92 weeks. If anything, however, the smaller venue seems to give Jessie a chance to show her pop chops, and remind us of why she topped the charts in the first place.

With a scaled-back set – just a central staircase and some decent lighting – and flanked by four backing musicians, Jessie makes her entrance wearing a long black T-shirt emblazoned with 'Birmingham' on the front and the gig's date of '27' on the back. Diving into a non-stop three-song attack, new album *Sweet Talker*'s *Ain't Been Done* slides into *Sexy Lady* and then her guitar-chopping euphoric No. 1 hit *Domino*. It's a strong start.

Seal Me With A Kiss, a polished slice of glossy R&B with a US retro feel, is too slick for its own good, but JJ's take on Whitney Houston's *I Have Nothing* is a highlight moment as she recalls hearing Houston's original from *The Bodyguard* soundtrack aged four before taking 16 years to have the guts to perform the song live. It's worth the wait.

With minimum banter and plenty of strutting, Jessie belts and "ooohs" her way through the beat-heavy *Sweet Talker*, *Laserlight* and a wiggling *Burnin' Up*, whose rap sequence is consigned to the backing track. The main set concludes with a rocked-up *Do It Like A Dude*, which induces plenty of air-guitar solos.

The predominantly female audience don't have long to wait for the encore. Donating her T-shirt to a fan, and threatening to harm anyone who tries to take it from the lucky recipient, Jessie cha-chings into *Price Tag*. Introducing *Masterpiece,* she declares "Every single word in this song is where I am in my life," before it's all over with the happy-clappy transatlantic smash *Bang Bang* which, Jessie reveals, fills her with pride.

Though she's keeping the vocal histrionics in check, Jessie still has one hell of a voice and when she gets a chance to let her personality shine through, she's a force that takes some beating. Get the next album right, and she'll be back in those arenas. Cha-ching, indeed. **Dave Freak**



Xposurephotos.com

LA ROUX
KOKO, LONDON

3 FEBRUARY

Next time the music industry complains about falling profits, point them at La Roux's second album *Trouble In Paradise* as an example of how often their failings remains their own fault. If ever the difference between how pop and rock acts are treated can be highlighted, the publicity surrounding last year's disco joy would make an ideal case study. Whereas rock acts taking five years between albums are treated as elusive visionaries, La Roux's Elly Jackson was viewed as a troublemaker with writer's block. True, the departure of Jackson's mysterious bandmate Ben Langmaid was intriguing… but was that the whole story of *Trouble In Paradise*? It reeked of sexism, as if Jackson could never have been the driving force. The album tanked, yet it's much more consistent than her mega-selling debut. Jackson accused Polydor of failing to promote it properly, and it's hard to argue.

Jackson has blossomed as a live act too. Whereas shows around her commercial peak were nervy affairs with minimal production, here she's backed by an entertaining multi-instrumentalist quartet. It's significant that the only cover is Shirley & Co's disco staple *Shame Shame Shame*, as its chorus of "Shame on you if you can't dance too" summarises her newly unself-conscious approach to dancing like nobody's watching. All bar one of the recent album's nine songs earn their place in the 70-minute show, with the Hi-NRG intensity of *Sexotheque* a mid-set highlight, despite a naff slap bass intro. Main set closer *Silent Partner* is magnificent, as Jackson's band take turns to stand on the drum riser while their frontwoman appears not to give a toss as to what anyone else makes of her impassioned yowl of "All I need is silence!"

The visual highlight comes in the encore. Having danced in and out of the spotlight throughout, Jackson allows the four main beams to centre in on her face, framing her as she halts old favourite *Tigerlily* for a full minute to look, frankly, alien. It's a proper pop star moment, before *Bulletproof* ends proceedings with the inevitable mass singalong.

The remainder of this NME Awards show had seen awful twee hippies Puma Rosa precede the infinitely more exciting Boxed In, whose throbbing yet sardonic pulse was a riotous update on New Order's *Technique*. But the night belongs to Jackson. If she can find a record label who understands her, she'll be bulletproof once more. **JE**


Derek Bremner/NME

No.16
STEVE STRANGE
WILD LIFE

The sad and sudden death of Steve Strange from a heart attack in February has led one of synthpop's true pioneers to finally be re-assessed. This typically, er, fruity publicity photo was taken for the *Mind Of A Toy* single. By then, Visage were already imploding. With such strong personalities as Midge Ure and Banshees guitarist John McGeoch, the band was always destined to burn out. Visage also featured Rusty Egan, who hosted New Romantic's unofficial headquarters The Blitz Club with Strange. Visage's self-titled 1980 debut album is a touchstone of futurist glamour, housing the immortal *Fade To Grey*. Although for a long time Strange was better known for his personal problems, once he unveiled a mostly new line-up of Visage in 2012 he was then back on track, and their final studio album *Hearts And Knives* is well worth investigating.

John Earls



Fin Costello / Getty Images

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